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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE WRITINGS OF ISAK DINESEN: A TANGLED WEB OF FICTION AND NON- FICTION

BY

ERIKA ROTHWELL

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta

FALL 1992

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE WRITINGS OF ISAK DINESEN'S TALES: A TANGLED WEB OF FICTION AND NON-FICTION submitted by ERIKA ROTHWELL in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

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05/27/92

ABSTRACT

In considering the relationship between Karen Blixen's fiction and non-fiction, this thesis examines the use and interplay of tapestry, needlework, and clothing motifs. It is argued that Blixen's oeuvre itself is like tapestry. Motifs which are laid out and defined in her non-fiction are executed in her fiction and vice-versa. For example, in Blixen's non-fiction, needlework is portrayed as a means of deception that has historically allowed women to achieve their own agendas in despite of societal restrictions. Such women are found in the tales. Blixen also includes male needleworkers in her tales, but their characters and exploits receive a negative treatment. It seems that Blixen reserves the duplicitous use of needlework for women in her works. In Blixen's non-fiction, clothing, like needlework, is described as a means for a woman to express herself. Clothing is an extension of her self. In the tales, women use clothing to express themselves and achieve their own ends. Clothing, therefore, seems to be an extension of needlework. However, while female needleworkers successfully use needlework to deceive, no women in Blixen's tales are able to use clothing with complete success in such a manner. This difference does not invalidate the view of clothing as an extension of needlework. Clothing, unlike needlework, is a social construct. It may offer freedom, but it may also restrict freedom. This view of clothing is remarkably like Thomas Carlyle's, and, in fact, it seems highly likely that Blixen is responding and reacting to the 'Philosophy of Clothes' set out in Sartor Resartus. Blixen's philosophy, however, is a woman's philosophy of clothing. She is especially concerned with the restrictions that clothing placed upon women in nineteenth-century society. The thesis concludes that reading Blixen's fiction and non-fiction in conjunction is a valuable exercise and that the two bodies of literature illuminate each other.

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Abbreviations

AA	The Angelic Avengers
AD	Anecdotes of Destiny
CN	Carnival: Entertainments and Posthumous Tales
DG	Daguerreotypes and Other Essays
ER	Ehrengard
Letters	Isak Dinesen: Letters from Africa, 1914-1931
LT	Last Tales
MM	On Modern Marriage
OA	Out of Africa
RT	The Revenge of Truth
SG	Shadows on the Grass
SGT	Seven Gothic Tales
WT	Winter's Tales

INTRODUCTION

KAREN BLIXEN AND THE FEMALE ART OF TAPESTRY

In 1959, interviewer Curtis Cate wrote that Karen Blixen's "hands, like Penelope's, are busy still, weaving new fantasies on the ancient loom of myth. And it is a truly monumental tapestry [the unfinished Albondcani] she is working on today. . . " (153).[1] The image of a weaver at work upon her tapestry is drawn upon repeatedly to describe not only the creation and construction of Blixen's prose fiction, but also the character and quality of her finished product.

Eric Johannesson calls Blixen's tales "intricate embroideries" that resemble the Arabian Nights--stories that are "woven around interlaced tales" (10). Glenway Westcott writes that Blixen's skilful story-telling often "composes a double or triple fabric" (159). Jean Stafford describes "The Monkey" as a story that one might "paint in water colours, or work a tapestry of in silk thread" (111). Errol Trzebinski notes that Blixen "wove her first adult narratives" for Denys Finch Hatton (194) and that Africa was simply "too beautiful not to be woven into her tales" (190).

According to Robert Langbaum, Blixen's readers must constantly be "weaving the pattern of the story" (24), because she

> gives us within her frame enough intricacy of texture to create an illusion of, or perhaps a substitute for depth; but she reminds us that the canvas is there by fabricating her inner world of tales that are told . . . . (25)

Marianne Juhl likens Blixen's narrator in Seven Gothic Tales to a weaver--a "supreme authority who gathers up all the threads" (64). In her biography of Blixen, Judith Thurman writes that there "is in Dinesen's work and thinking a frontier--more of a fixed circle, like an embroidery hoop--that separates the wild from the domestic" (25).

Why the proliferation of metaphors comparing the author and her writing to a weaver at her tapestry or a needlewoman at her embroidery? One reason may be that the image of the author as weaver of tapestry is in keeping with Blixen's sex and the persona she seems to have cultivated. Freud suggested that "the only material contribution to the development of civilization by women appeared to be the invention of plaiting and weaving" (Sydie 187). Weaving and embroidering tapestry have been the proper occupation for the seemly woman since the age of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Karen Blixen created the mask of "Isak Dinesen"--an antique and mysterious persona of a woman with a finger on the pulse of old story and myth. Donald Hannah quotes some remarks made by Blixen which expand upon this notion of a cultivated persona:

'I belong to an ancient, idle, wild and useless tribe, perhaps I am even one of the last members of it, who, for many thousands of years, in all countries and parts of the world, has, now and again, stayed for some time among the hard-working honest people in real life, and sometimes has been fortunate enough to create another sort of reality for them, which in some way or another, has satisfied them. I am a story-teller.' (60)

Judith Thurman notes that "Isak Dinesen" came to be "'a brand name in a funny way, a standard form which she simply filled in, according to a rigid formula'" (349). It was in adherence to this formula that Karen Blixen confounded interviewers with statements like: "I am really three thousand years old and have dined with Socrates" (Walter "The Art of Fiction" 57).[2]

Blixen is likening herself to the archetypical image of the storyteller. Such a storyteller is found beside an ancient gate in "The Blank Page" (LT). She is coffee-brown and veiled in black. Her stories are drawn from her exceptionally broad experience of life. In Out of Africa, Blixen describes the High Priest from India who visited the farm as having a face "which is interested in everything, and by the nature of things incapable of surprise." This expression is "not a masculine expression--it goes with swaddling clothes and the woman's frock, and went well with the beautiful white cashmere robes of my guest." The "faces

of very old women of the world, who have seen all of it and through it, will have that same look" (153). Thus, to Blixen, the ability to absorb history and tell stories is as feminine as the ability to weave tapestries. The "Isak Dinesen" created by Blixen embodies this description.

In another article entitled "Isak Dinesen Conquers Rome," Eugene Walter calls Dinesen "a creature as mysterious as Andersen's Snow Queen" (46), "a sibyl" (47), and "a sorceress" (51). Elsa Gress refers to her as a "a mixture of grande dame and gypsy woman" (71). When Blixen died in 1962, the Danish scholar Jens Kruuse had his paper print the headline: "SCHEHERAZADE DEAD" (Migel 146). Blixen is constantly associated with powerful and heroic female characters from both fairy tale and myth. Therefore, it is not surprising that Curtis Cate compares Karen Blixen, spinner of tales, to Penelope whose spinning made her one of the heroines of myth.

Tapestry is also an appropriate metaphor for the style of Karen Blixen's tales. Tapestry is intricate. Tapestry is artifice. Tapestry is art. Tapestry is antique. Tapestry is stylized. Tapestry is symbolic. And finally, tapestry is story--mythic, gothic, and folkloric. Listing these elements is the first step in the exploration of Blixen's Seven Gothic Tales (1934), Winter's Tales (1942), Last Tales (1957), and Anecdotes of Destiny (1958). Comparing the Blixen tales to a large and rich tapestry is an eloquent and

economical way of evoking the myriad characteristics of her style.

The content as well as the style of Blixen's work may also have inspired critics' and biographers' repeated use of the tapestry metaphor. After all, it is a metaphor that she makes compelling use of in Out of Africa. A passing herd of elephant recall "...in giant size, the border of a very old, infinitely precious Persian carpet, in the dyes of green, yellow and black-brown" (23). The African forest is likened to "the depths of an old tapestry, in places faded and in others darkened with age, but marvellously rich in green shades" (63). A leopard is described as "a tapestry animal" (65). Even Blixen's pet deerhounds are like those seen in "old paintings and tapestries . . . [and] have in themselves a tendency to change, by their looks and manners, their surroundings into tapestry" (67).

The creation of such metaphors inevitably leads to a nexus between Out of Africa and tapestry. Blixen's Africa is a giant tapestry. In his consideration of Out of Africa, Eric Johannesson writes that "the landscape, the animals, the people, the events on the farm: all these are fitted into a world of such formal perfection that it appears as a tapestry" (127) and, later, that "the people, the natives, become part of this artificial, tapestry world" (130). The Modern Library edition of Out of Africa even featured a dust jacket decorated with a tapestry-like design (Macleod 17).[3]

In Out of Africa, Blixen illustrates both what her writing is and is not like. The tapestry metaphors that are introduced early in the narrative suggest that her work is like tapestry. In the scene where the houseboy, Kamante, sceptically asks the narrator if she truly believes she can write a book, Blixen clearly establishes what her writing is not. The doubting Kamante points out that the narrator's book is all loose pages and produces a hard bound blue book to further stress his point. The book is the Odyssey. According to Kamante, "the man who has written it is very clever" (50). He asks if her book will "be as heavy as this" (50). The narrator's answer is "no." Her book will not be like the Odyssey.

What does it mean for a book to be not like the Odyssey? First, perhaps one should ask: what is the Odyssey like? Homer's Odyssey is an ancient work of incalculable influence that stands at the very beginning of the patriarchal literary tradition. It is a "heavy" work not only in Kamante's literal context, but also in the context of literary history.

In declaring that her work is not like the Odyssey, Blixen announces a departure from the patriarchal tradition.[4] The Odyssey is a book generally considered to have been written by a man and is largely about men, even if it does contain more domestic details than the Iliad. Blixen's work is obviously not by a man, nor will it be

largely about men. If Blixen was aware of the theory that the Odyssey was written by a woman, she did not want to share that poet's and languish in obscurity.[5] Harold Bloom calls Homer the "inevitable precursor" (75), but Blixen does not take the great patriarchal father of literature for her model. Instead, through metaphor, she allies herself with Penelope whose work was tapestry. The anecdote about Kamante and the Odyssey not only establishes what Blixen's work is not but points towards what it is by strengthening the inference that Blixen's work, like Penelope's, is a form of tapestry.

As Penelope is not only one of Homer's characters but is also famed for patiently and dutifully carrying out her household tasks until the wandering Odysseus returns, Blixen's identification with Penelope may not initially seem like a break with patriarchal tradition. In fact, on the contrary, it may seem that Blixen is aligning herself with the traditionally passive role of women.

However, one must remember that while Penelope sat meekly at her loom with her eyes fixed diligently upon her proper woman's work, she was practising a deception. For three years she wove by day and unwove by night to put off the importunate suitors whom she had promised to answer when her work was finished (Od. II,85-105). While assuming the facade of a passive and obedient woman who knew her place and would be guided by men, in reality, Penelope was taking

deceptive action to preserve her own autonomy.

Before considering this element of Penelope's story in relation to Blixen's work, it is important to remember that Penelope has sister-weavers in Greek mythology. The first of these sisters is Arachne, whose skill in weaving made her famous. Her pride in her skill was so great that she challenged the goddess Athena to a contest. Both the girl and the goddess wove intricate tapestries that told stories. Arachne wove a tapestry showing the crimes committed by the gods and was turned into a spider as punishment for her presumption (Metamorphoses 134-138). Arachne's fate seems to be a warning directed at women who would exult in and be proud of their work. The proper woman, it seems, works meekly with no thought of reward or recognition and does not use her art to call attention to the injustices of those in power--be they men or gods.

Ovid also tells the story of Penelope's second and more important sister-weaver, Philomela, in the Metamorphoses. Philomela was raped by her brother-in-law, Tereus, the Thracian hero. She poured forth words of scorn and curses upon him for this crime, and he cut out her tongue to silence her. Voiceless, deserted, and imprisoned, Philomela still found a way to speak. She "set up her threads on a barbarian loom, and wove a scarlet design on a white ground, which pictured the wrong she had suffered" (150). She sends this tapestry to her sister, Procne, who takes a terrible

revenge upon Tereus. Tapestry gives Philomela a voice and, like Penelope, she triumphs over the male who thought that he had defeated her. At the end of Ovid's story, Philomela is transformed into a nightingale by the gods.[6]

In Out of Africa the feminist nature of Blixen's work is signalled by the perceived nexus between tapestry and/or needlework and her writing. Tapestry implicitly becomes a symbol of creative feminine work, feminine voice, and feminine deception. Karen Blixen may have taken a male pseudonym, written about men, and used male narrators, but, nonetheless, her works reveals a deep interest in the lives and circumstances of women.

In the past, Blixen has been labelled reactionary and anti-feminist. In "Oration at a Bonfire, Fourteen Years Late," Blixen claims that she "never thought of [feminism]" (Dag 68), and Else Cedarborg notes that this speech "gave rise to a long row of indignant protests from feminists" (26). These protests were largely in response to the statement that "a man's centre of gravity, the substance of his being, consists in what he has executed and performed in life; the woman's in what she is" (73). In other words, men are to do and women are to be.

However, the main thesis of Blixen's speech is not reactionary. Instead, the thesis is that woman no longer has to fight for her rights because she is now man's equal. Therefore, women can now be unashamedly female and rejoice

in their "otherness" and their own identities. In Shadows on the Grass (1961), Blixen reiterates this view by describing the perfect unity which she believes is composed of two opposites, like male and female, for a "community of but one sex would be a blind world" (4).

Both Else Cedarborg and Sara Stambaugh point out that Blixen's views are in direct opposition to the theories advanced by Simone de Beauvoir in her influential work, The Second Sex. De Beauvoir sees the female role of "the Other" as reductive and negative because woman as "Other" is "defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential" (xvi). Cedarborg notes that de Beauvoir's opinions were "adopted by modern feminists in the 1970s and 1980s" (17). If one measures Blixen's "Oration" against de Beauvoir's feminist yardstick, it will obviously come up short.

However, because Blixen does not see "otherness" and female autonomy as mutually exclusive, it does not follow that she or her entire oeuvre is anti-feminist or reactionary. In fact, "Oration at a Bonfire" explicitly reiterates some of the more subtle threads running through Out of Africa regarding women and tapestry:

> Decorative needlework has never been viewed as actual work or a separate activity, but as an accompaniment to a woman's real work or, in one sense, her coquetry.

> Though women have created many beautiful and lasting things in needlework, the actual value of needlework lies deeper, in so far as the most active and significant women could very well engage in darning stockings--yes, Penelope unravelled the day's work every night, and nevertheless, or perhaps for that very reason, Penelope's weaving became the world's most famous. Needlework was an activity pursued while greater work was being prepared, continued, or completed--while the woman who was embroidering or darning stockings listened to confidential messages, entertained and encouraged intelligent friends, intrigued, or told stories to and taught the younger generation. (Dag 76)

In this passage, Blixen explicitly expresses many of the ideas implicit in Out of Africa. Historically, writing, like needlework, was not viewed as "actual work" for women despite the fact that women have been able to create "beautiful and lasting things" in words as well as in tapestry. Creating tapestry through weaving and needlework has long been considered a proper occupation for women, but at the same time for the "active and significant woman" it was a means of "intrigue," a means of achieving a dual purpose, a means of creating something "beautiful and lasting," and a means of finding a voice and expressing herself (Dag 76).

The voice in Blixen's fiction is, as Cedarborg notes, often "radiant with indignation at women's conditions in a double-standard society" (26), yet for years this indignation went unnoticed. Eric Johanneson, Robert Langbaum, and Donald Hannah, who wrote the first book length studies of Blixen's fiction, make little or no mention of her portrayal of women and their lives. Why was her treatment of women passed over so easily?

Blixen's interest in the position of woman escaped critics because neither her feminism nor her tales could be called overt or simple. On the contrary, the complexity of her attitude towards feminism is matched by the ornate and allusive style of her fiction. In 1983, Sara Stambaugh wrote that "because [Blixen's] stories are difficult and because she claimed not to be a feminist, the intense feminism in the stories of Karen Blixen ... is only beginning to be noticed" (171). Marianne Juhl theorizes that "Karen Blixen wished to use caution in making her tales into "'women's stories,' which at that time were not an acknowledged genre as they are today" (55).

Therefore, the critics who compared Blixen's work to a tapestry chose a metaphor that describes Blixen's work in more ways than one. Blixen's tales are dual and deceptive, just as tapestry is a dual and deceptive medium that deals in doubles and illusion. Look once, and a flower supported by a self-effacing background of vines is dominant. Look

again, and the flower is besieged and threatened by a tangled net of enclosing vines. Which is the true picture? Which is the dominant element? Is it a picture of a flower or a picture of vines?

Many of Blixen's tales operate in a similar manner. The title of "The Cardinal's First Tale" (LT) seems to indicate that the tale is the Cardinal's story. The Cardinal certainly believes that he is telling the story of his life; however, in doing so he also tells the story of his mother, the Princess Benedetta. In her analysis of the tale, Susan Hardy Aiken concentrated on events "generally perceived as peripheral" (402) and found that the

> Cardinal's tale of origins is the story of a woman's transformation from passive object, exchanged within a patrilineal economy, to disruptive agent who, through the unfolding--the explication of her own desire, rewrites both herself and the androcentric cultural text that would encode her merely as a sign within its borders. (402)

Thus, the tale is not the Cardinal's tale, but the Princess Benedetta's tale.

The Princess is a woman who turns her confinement and constraint into liberation. She discovers her own desire and creativity through music and words. The Princess keeps these new revelations secret from the world, just as she keeps her pregnancy from her husband until it becomes

obvious, yet when her new liberation is threatened by her husband, she proves herself capable of taking defensive action.

When the Prince informs his wife that he has chosen a name and a future for the coming child, the Princess

> . . . very quietly informed her husband that she too had been pondering the future and name of her son, and had made up her mind. She had borne the house of her husband one son; now she was free. The child to come was to be the son of his mother . . . . (11)

Benedetta has come to the conclusion that she is free to be herself, to name her own child, and to create her own existence.

In the Cardinal's attitude toward his mother, Aiken concludes that, finally, "the order of the father appears to reassert its dominance" (19). Nevertheless, the woman's story entwined in the narrative is told and actually accounts for the main substance of the narrative. Like Philomela's tapestry, the story gives Benedetta a voice. And both stories deal with the male treatment of women. "The First Cardinal's Tale" is a tapestry that interweaves the male and female experience so that the reader must decide whose tale is dominant--the Cardinal's or the Princess's. Blixen's tales share not only the intricacy and artifice but also the duality and duplicity of the medium of tapestry.

That the metaphor of tapestry which suits Blixen's tales so admirably should be found in Out of Africa and Daguerreotypes illustrates an unexplored relationship: the interaction of Blixen's fiction and non-fiction. If Blixen's tales are to be seen as a tapestry, what is the relation of her non-fiction--Letters from Africa 1914-1931 (1978), Out of Africa (1937), Shadows on the Grass (1961), and Daguerreotypes (1979)--to this tapestry?

Blixen's non-fiction may lack the ornate duality that is present in her fiction, but, nevertheless, the non-fiction is created from the same materials. The same ideas and themes are present. The non-fiction displays the same motifs as the fictional tapestry, but in a different fashion. The relationship might be likened to that between a tapestry and its plan or pattern. Each portrays the same picture, but the pattern offers insight into how the tapestry is constructed, and the tapestry offers insight into how the pattern has been executed. A tapestry can be constructed from a pattern, just as a pattern can be reconstructed from a tapestry. In the same way, Blixen did not write all non-fiction and then all fiction. Essays were written before certain tales and tales were written before certain essays.

In "The Immortal Story" (AD), when Elishma tries to convince Virginie to accept a part in Mr Clay's charade, he reminds her that in each of the scarves he brought to her as

presents on a previous visit "'there was a pattern. You told your friend Mr. Simpson that you liked one pattern better than another. But there was a pattern in all of them'" (189). He goes on to tell her that "'sometimes the lines of a pattern will run the other way of what you expect. As in a looking glass. . . . But for all that it is still a pattern'" (189). Virginie, we are told, "had a taste for patterns" (189). Blixen, too, had a taste for patterns. Patterns in her non-fiction may be traced in her fiction and, conversely, the patterns of her fiction may be found in her non-fiction. These patterns, too, might be reversed at times to achieve different effects.

In other words, reading Blixen's non-fiction provides important insight into the symbolism, themes, and characters in her fiction. In discussing H.C. Branner's The Riding Master, Blixen says, "The book must be read more than once. Many things in it mean more--mean something different--than they appear to do at first" (Dag 158). This statement also applies to her own fiction. And when Blixen's fiction is read and re-read in conjunction with her non-fiction, different meanings and new perspectives surface.

CHAPTER ONE

PENELOPE'S DESCENDANTS

Karen Blixen links her writing to tapestry because weaving and needlework are both means of female expression. Yet, although Penelope is the most famous weaver in the world, no one knows what colours she used or what scenes she depicted or what projects she completed. She is famous for the deceptive use she made of her weaving, not for her weaving itself. While she wove meekly, Penelope was actually taking action to preserve her own autonomy and deceive her suitors into inaction. Her needlework is a metaphor not only for expression, but also for deception.

The seemingly passive figure of Penelope working on her tapestry is symbolic of all the possibilities of proper woman's work, which includes weaving and various types of needlework. Both male and female characters who weave, sew, and embroider are incorporated into Blixen's works. The female characters may be divided into two categories: those who use needlework as a means of deception and those who use needlework as a means of escape. The male needleworkers do not make active use of needlework. For male characters, taking up needlework indicates a nature that is warped and disturbed. The proper and heroic use of needlework seems to be exclusively feminine within Blixen's works.

Needlework has long been portrayed as the special province of women. In 1640 John Taylor wrote the poem "Prayse of the Needle," which was printed in a book of embroidery patterns entitled The Needle's Excellency. The book also contained six sonnets by Taylor praising famous needlewomen. In "Prayse of the Needle,"[7] Taylor wishes:

> And for my Countries quiet, I should like,
> That women-kinde shoulde use no other Pike.
> It will increase their peace, enlarge their store,
> To use their tongues lesse, and their Needles more.
> (27-30)

Later in the poem, Taylor describes needlework as that which contains

> . . . Posies rare, and Anagrams,
> Significque searching sentences from names,
> True History, or various pleasant fiction,
> In sundry colours mixt, with Arts commixion,
> All in Dimension, Ovals, Squares and Rounds,
> Arts life included within Natures bounds:
> So that Art seemeth merely naturall,
> In forming shapes so Geometricall;
> And though our Country everywhere is fild
> With Ladies, and with Gentlewomen skild
> In this rare Art, yet here they may discerne
> Some things to teach them if they list to learne.
> (83-94)

Taylor obviously characterizes needlework as woman's art. The references to "anagrams" and "searching sentences" obliquely acknowledge the deceptive possibilities of needlework. However, there is no real consideration of the uses to which women may put such deceptive opportunities.

In 1893, Elizabeth Rosevear quoted Nathanial Hawthorne in the introduction to her needlework guide. Hawthorne, too, perceived needlework as particularly feminine activity:

> There is something extremely pleasant and even touching--at least, of very sweet, soft, and winning effect--in this peculiarity of needlework distinguishing women from men. Our own sex is incapable of any such byplay aside from the main business of life; but women--be they of what earthly rank they may, however gifted with intellect or genius--always have handiwork ready to fill the tiny gap of every vacant moment. A needle is familiar to the fingers of them all. . . . And they have greatly the advantage of us in this respect. The slender thread of silk or cotton keeps them united with the small, familiar, gentle interests of life, the continually operating influence of which do so much for the health of character, and carry off what would otherwise be a dangerous accumulation of morbid sensibility. A vast deal of human sympathy runs along the electric line, stretching from the throne to the wicker chair of the humblest

> seamstress, and keeping high and low in a species of communion with their kindred beings. Methinks it is a token of healthy and gentle characteristics, when women of high thoughts and accomplishments love to sew; especially as they are never more at home with their own hearts than while so occupied. (4-5)

In some ways Blixen is in agreement with Hawthorne's evaluation of needlework. She, too, sees needlework as an exclusively feminine occupation, stressing that "one cannot teach a boy needlework" (Dag 76). Blixen also shares Hawthorne's view of needlework as an occupation open to women of every status and intelligence. She writes that even the "most active and significant woman could very well engage in darning stockings" (Dag 76).

However, Blixen and Hawthorne soon diverge. Blixen does not see needlework as a "token of healthy and gentle characteristics" (Hawthorne 4). Instead, she posits that women have taken advantage of just such perceptions and turned needlework into a means of deception. In "Oration at a Bonfire" she says that while women "have created many beautiful and lasting things in needlework, the actual value of needlework lies deeper." Needlework "was an activity pursued while far greater work was being prepared, continued, or completed." Women could embroider while they "listened to confidential messages, entertained and encouraged intelligent friends, intrigued, or told stories

to and taught the younger generation" (Dag 76).

In Blixen's tales, needlework is generally undertaken while some other activity is pursued. In "Copenhagen Season" Ib overhears Adelaide and her girl friends during "discussion over their needlework" (266). He is excluded. Needlework provides a female environment wherein the girls are free to tell secrets, share confidences, and recount stories. In "The Supper at Elsinore," Madame Bæk watches the face of Morton de Connick "over her needlework and glasses" and learns that "something had happened to the engaged people" (230). Of all the members of the de Connick household, she alone is not surprised when Morten jilts Adrienne Rosenstand and runs away to sea.

However, it is the needleworker's ability to disguise active "intrigue" that is most apparent in Blixen's tales. To Blixen, the ability to deceive and conceal is a distinguishing characteristic of the autonomous woman. In "Oration at a Bonfire" she stresses that the "early women of the women's movement were not only just, courageous, and unswervingly loyal--they were also sly!" (Dag 80).

Slyness and deceitfulness are not generally considered to be good and honourable qualities, but Blixen couples them with courage and loyalty. Slyness in the autonomous woman is a heroic quality. Blixen makes this clear by comparing deceitful women to the Homeric heroes of Troy: "When [women] were repulsed from the ancient citadels of males,

the strongholds of the church, science, and law, they adapted themselves as in their time the Acheans did in Troy, by going within the walls in a wooden horse" (Dag 80).

This allusion to Troy once again recalls the Homeric world of the Iliad and the Odyssey in which Penelope deceitfully concealed her own agenda behind a facade of submissive obedience and devotion to a seemly female occupation. Like Penelope, women determined to pursue their own agendas have had to be sly, deceitful, and perpetually on the defensive. Both weaving and needlework have long been considered proper female occupations and, thus, offer an admirable cover for deception.

Such sly women resemble the bushbuck Lulu in Out of Africa. Lulu "was a slim delicately rounded doe, from her nose to her toes unbelievably beautiful. She looked like a minutely painted illustration to Heine's song of the wise and gentle gazelles by the flow of the river Ganges" (69). However, Lulu's gentleness is an illusion. She had "to the highest degree, the feminine trait of appearing to be exclusively on the defensive, concentrated on guarding the integrity of her being, when she was really, with every force in her, bent on the offensive" (69).

Lulu appears to conform to the expectation that she will be wise and gentle like Heine's gazelles, but in reality she is quite different. She is not gentle and shyly defensive, but wild and determinedly aggressive. In the

same way, a woman occupied with her needlework might seem to embody Hawthorne's "healthy and gentle characteristics" and appear to be "at home in [her] own heart," while she was actually taking the offensive and actively pursuing an agenda of her own (Rosever 4).

Madame Thérèse Defarge, in Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities, is such a woman. Madame Defarge and her knitting are a splendid illustration of the deceptive possibilities of needlework.[8] Blixen was an admirer of Dickens. In a letter she writes of "Dickens, for instance, whom I really love, and most of whose works I believe I have read . . ." (235). In another letter, Blixen refers directly to A Tale of Two Cities: "Just as in "Two Cities" Dickens describes the situation before the Revolution by saying: 'The earth and its riches belong to me Monseigneur said.'--so it was with the situation of men and women in regard to all the glories and possibilities of the world" (Letters 261). It is quite likely that Blixen had Madame Defarge in mind when she wrote about the dual function of needlework.

Madame Thérèse Defarge demonstrates that needlework is a deceptive medium in terms of both its production and its products: A middle-aged shop-keeper's wife sits by the fire and knits diligently to create a pretty pattern. During the French Revolution, an agent encodes and records information. Surprisingly, this is one scenario, not two. In Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities, Madame Thérèse Defarge is a fierce

revolutionary who conceals a register of names in the patterns of her knitting. Madame Defarge deceives the world in the production of this register, for any passersby will merely see a woman knitting. The finished product is also deceptive, for while it appears to be nothing more than a prettily knitted garment, it actually contains coded communications that will cost men their lives.

Madame Defarge is not generally considered to be an admirable character. In fact, as Edwin Charles observes, she is generally reviled as a "cold fury," a "phlegmatic knitter-away of men's lives," and an "embodiment of insensate hate" (Charles 157). In a chapter entitled "Justice to Madame Defarge," Charles qualifies such descriptions by pointing out that Thérèse Defarge's family suffered great atrocities at the hands of the Evrémondes family. To Blixen, who sympathized with the Jacobins and Robespierre, Madame Defarge was probably a heroine.[9] However, as villainess or as heroine, there is no doubt that Madame Defarge is an "active and significant" woman.

Like Penelope's weaving, Madame Defarge's knitting remains formless and characterless. Is she working on stockings or a shawl? What colours is she using? Is her pattern a pretty one? Such information is irrelevant because the actual needlework is immaterial. Like Penelope's weaving, Madame Defarge's needlework is important only because it is a means of engaging in intrigue to fulfil her

own ends. As Blixen says, the "active and significant woman" did her needlework while she "prepared far greater work" (Dag 76). Blixen's tales contain a number of female characters who, like Madam Defarge, are descendants of Penelope.

These descendants of Penelope are characters who engage in or are associated with weaving or some form of needlework. These characters vary in age, class, nationality, and marital status. Some are sensitive and sympathetic characters; others are repulsive and repugnant. They are bound by a single thread: the fact that each is associated with both some form of needlework and some form of duality and/or deception.

With her many identities, Pellegrina Leoni stands out above all the other female characters in Blixen's works who practice deception. In "The Dreamers" (SGT) Pellegrina is linked to needlework through her incarnation as Madame Lola, the milliner. Millinery may not immediately be associated with needlework, but a milliner is "one who designs, trims, or sells women's hats" (OED), and needlework is part of both the designing and trimming processes for which Madame Lola is famed. In "Tempests" (AD), Blixen links millinery specifically with sewing. Malli Ross's mother is a milliner who "sewed hats for ladies in a small fjord town" (78). Lola, therefore, is a woman who engages in needlework. Like Pellegrina, Lola is a great artist: "never in the history of

millinery had there been such a genius" (297).

Lola is automatically associated with deception and duality because, in reality, she is Pellegrina. However, in the role of Madame Lola, Pellegrina also plays a dual role. Lola is a needlewoman of great talent engaged in one of the few careers that was seemly and acceptable for a woman in the nineteenth century. However, in keeping with her association with needlework, Lola has a second identity. She is a revolutionary and "a conspirator of the first water, who made use of her atelier as a meeting place for the most dangerous revolutionists. And in this capacity also she was a genius, a Circe, moving and organizing things with her hands . . ." (297). It is fitting that Pellegrina's only double role is associated with needlework.

Like Pellegrina, the Prioress of Closter Seven in "The Monkey" (SGT) not only plays a dual and deceptive role, but is also associated with needlework. The Prioress's nephew Boris, who is obliged to marry because he has been involved in some sort of homosexual scandal at court, comes to Closter Seven and is received in her "lofty parlour" which has "three tall windows" that are hung with "heavy curtains which had on them flower garlands done in cross-stitch" (113).

The Prioress suggests that Boris ask Athena Hopballehus, the heiress to a neighbouring estate, to be his bride. However, Athena not only refuses Boris's offer but

also announces that she never intends to marry. The Prioress is enraged. She strides about her parlour and then suddenly turns from Boris and goes up to the window with the cross-stitched curtains "as if she meant to throw herself out" (138).[10] When the Prioress turns from the window, she is "all changed" and looks "so much lighter" (138). There is little doubt that this is the point at which the Prioress exchanges places with the monkey, who vanishes from the story at this point.

The needlework curtains not only hint at the Prioress's ability to practice deception but are closely associated with the manifestation of her double nature. William Mishler describes the Prioress as "the heart of the secret of this story and the key to its doubleness, for she is, literally, two. . . ." Readers are "given clues" to the Prioress's double nature, but "the clues are tiny and we credit them retrospectively" (431). One of the least obtrusive of these clues is the cross-stitch on the Prioress's curtains.

Robert Langbaum also deals with the Prioress's double nature. He notes that the she has a "a night-and-day nature" and that the night nature is "made palpable" by the monkey (82). When Boris comes to Closter Seven, he asks his Aunt Cathinka for her "advice and help" (113). In her civilized and virginal day nature, the Prioress offers advice to Boris. In her wild and primal monkey night nature, she

invites Athena to a supper of seduction, tells licentious tales, administers an aphrodisiac to Boris, and sends him to rape Athena. This is the sort of "help" only the monkey, with its traditional sexual association, could give.

When the monkey reappears, the transformation is reversed, and "the true Prioress of Closter Seven" rises from where the monkey had been (162). Labelling her the "true" Prioress is ironic, because neither the dark side nor the light side of the Prioress exists in isolation. Miss Malin is made up of both night and day. Either side may gain temporary ascendancy over the other, but it is impossible to say which is the "true" Prioress, because the two sides are hopelessly intertwined and cannot be separated. In fact, they are like the pattern worked in needlework wherein a flower may alternately appear to dominate a background of vines or appear to be dominated by those same vines.

Like the Prioress, Princess Benedetta, the heroine of "The Cardinal's First Tale" (LT), is also associated with embroidery emblematic of her dual identity. However, unlike the Prioress, Benedetta's duality is not to be compared to two intertwined, but equally visible elements of tapestry. The Princess's second identity is more secret than the Prioress's. It is hidden beneath the conventional face she turns toward the world, just as "anagrams" and "searching sentences signifique" may be concealed in needlework (Taylor

83-84). As Susan Hardy Aiken has convincingly demonstrated in her article, "The Uses of Duplicity: Isak Dinesen and Questions of Feminist Criticism," the Princess begins as a passive object but evolves into an individual capable of deception. The new vision of self or identity that develops through her study of music and literature must be concealed behind the facade of the girl who married Prince Pompelio at fifteen, became pregnant, saw herself "as a fragile, precious vessel," and gave birth to her "husband's old name" (6). The change in Benedetta becomes apparent during her next pregnancy, when she does not inform her husband that she is pregnant and chooses a name and a future for the child by herself. She decides that her new son will be named Dionysio and he will be an artist.

When the Prince informs his wife that he has decided to name the child Atanasio and that he will have a career in the church, the Princess keeps "her embroidering frame on her lap and her eyes on it" (11). However, when the Prince's speech ceases, she

> very quietly informed her husband that she too had been pondering the future and the name of her son, and had made up her mind. She had borne the house of her husband one son; now she was free. The child to come was to be the child of his mother. . . ." (11)

Like Penelope, Benedetta is deceptive. The meek, pregnant wife who is about to provide another heir for her husband's

house is in reality an autonomous woman who is determined to claim her child as her own.

The Prince has only seen his compliant wife properly occupied with her embroidery. However, Benedetta is one of the "significant women" actively engaged in "intrigue," whom Dinesen describes in "Oration at a Bonfire" (Dag 76). While Benedetta's needle has been plying the canvas, "far greater work" was in progress (Dag 76). The Princess has come to the conclusion that she is free to be herself and to name her own child. Under the cover of needlework, Benedetta has composed and contrived her own declaration of independence.

The birth of twins seems to resolve the conflict between Benedetta and her husband but actually only restages it. While the twins are still infants, a fire breaks out in the nursery and one of the baby boys dies (15). The Prince declares that his son Atanasio has been spared and the surviving child is raised under this name and educated for a career in the church (15). Outwardly, the Princess acquiesces.

After a brief collapse, she "never once touched upon the question of the children's identity," but, in her delirium she invoked the name Dionysio and cried that she was the "nymph of the mountain Nysa, and the chosen guardian of this child" (16). She also called little Atanasio "Pyrrha" during "their most intimate hours of play and confidence" (16). Langbaum notes that the name Pyrrha is

"the Greek word for fiery red, applied to wine and therefore another way of calling him Dionysus, god of wine" (28). Obviously, Benedetta continues to practice duplicity and live a double existence to achieve her own ends.

Both the Princess and the Prioress practice deception to achieve results that are specific and concrete. Benedetta constructs an identity independent of her husband's world and fulfils the desire to have a son who is "the child of his mother" (11). Cathinka, the Prioress in "The Monkey" (SGT), is able to arrange a marriage beneficial to both Boris and Athena. However, in "Rosa and Peter" (WT), Rosa is associated with weaving and deception, but, unlike the Princess and the Prioress, she has no specific agenda. Rosa's weaving is linked to the dreams that allow temporary escape from constraint, and not to any action taken to transform herself or the world that constrains her. Perhaps this is because she is an adolescent girl, instead of a young wife and mother like the Princess, or an older woman in a position of power like the Prioress. Dreaming of escape rather than facing reality and taking action is a typical adolescent strategy.

Rosa's father is a parson, who ensures that "death [is] zealously kept in view and lectured upon" (147). The parsonage is a house "overhung by the shadow of death" (151). Both Peter and Rosa seek to escape. Peter escapes into the world of nature. The story opens with a

description of the coming of a late spring. Rain falls and announces, "'You are to live,'" to the valleys, brooks, streams and forests" (146). Outdoors, Peter exalts in the coming of spring, which inspires him with a resolve to run away to sea.

However, Rosa is within the house standing by her loom, "on which she had just set up a piece of red-and-blue cotton" (148). At the beginning of the tale, Rosa and Peter occupy separate spheres, though as children, they "got on well" and "had many great adventures together" (149). This separation was initiated by Rosa when she "came into possession of a world of her own, inaccessible to the others" (149). No one "could tell where her world lay," nor would they understand if she told them that her world "was both infinite and secluded, playful and very grave, safe and dangerous" (149). Rosa's world is a "dream-world" and a "mystic garden" (149).

Rosa's weaving is equated with the adolescent fantasy world she has created to allow her to live a double existence and escape from the bleakness of her life. Rosa's dream world is woven into existence by the power and play of her imagination upon her experience of life, just as the cloth on her loom is woven into existence by the power and play of her fingers upon the raw cotton.[11] At one point, her dream world is "so vivid with her that she was surprised when she heard her father scolding Peter in the next room,

and realized that they were still both with her" (148). Rosa lives a dual existence as both the parson's obedient daughter and as a free spirit who roams over the green earth.

However, when the story opens Rosa no longer feels certain of her dream-world. Peter has begun "uninvitedly and before the whole household" to "give vent to his own fancies about the world and many of them rang strangely in Rosa's mind, like echoes of hers" (150). Rosa fears that Peter "might find the 'Sesame' which opened [her dream world], and encroach upon it, and she might meet him there any day" (150). Due to this fear, Rosa does not weave at her loom. When she first puts the cotton on the loom, she looks out the window instead of weaving (148), and later the narrator reiterates that "the girl Rosa did not weave, but looked out through the window" (150). Rosa is skilled not only in weaving at the loom but also in weaving herself into her dream world to escape the confines of the parsonage and the rule of her father; however, now she is afraid that she will find Peter in this world. Rosa can no longer weave the cotton on her loom or weave herself into her imaginary world.[12] Instead, she looks out the window and thinks "about nothing" (150).

However, finding Peter in her dream world is not the catastrophe Rosa fears, for if Peter has entered into her dream world, she enters his external natural world. Rosa

does not remain mewed in the house by her loom looking out the window at nature. She and Peter venture out into the natural world together when they go to see the ice break up on the Sound. Peter reflects that Rosa and the sea are "two ecstasies" that are not at all incompatible, because for him "the sea had become a female deity, and Rosa herself as powerful, foamy, salt, and universal as the sea" (158).

The Prioress, Benedetta, Lola/Pellegrina, and Rosa are as different as the deceptions and dualities they practice. However, there is little doubt that they are all examples of "active and significant" women--daughters that Penelope would be proud of. Rosa and Benedetta achieve the maximum of freedom available to them in their worlds, and, thus, their practice of intrigue seems positive. In her incarnation of Lola, Pellegrina achieves victories for the revolutionaries. The Prioress is manipulative and less sympathetic, but she does offer her help to Boris and saves him from a scandal that would have ruined his reputation in the eyes of society. Athena, too, is seemly saved from a "fanatical virginity" similar to that which afflicted Miss Malin in the "Deluge at Norderney" (18). The Prioress's means (and perhaps her ends) may be questionable, but her intentions are good in the context of her experience of the world.[13]

After so much emphasis upon weaving and needlework as the exclusive province of women, it is startling to find

that two male characters in Blixen's tales engage in needlework. Uncle Seneca in the story of the same name and Councilor Mathiesen in "The Poet" both do cross-stitch embroidery. This circumstance gives rise to many questions: Does the presence of male needleworkers weaken the conception of needlework as an exclusively female means of deception? How do the male needleworkers compare to their female counterparts? Do the men use needlework in the same way as women? Are they associated with duality and deception? Are they active and significant characters?

In fact, introducing male needleworkers does not weaken the concept of needlework as an exclusively female means of deception. Although the male characters associated with needlework engage in duality and deception, they produce nothing positive. Their failures may even strengthen the premise that needlework is a woman's means of deception. Nor are these male needleworkers "active and significant" characters in the same sense as their female counterparts. The female needleworkers are "active and significant" because they achieve positive results. The male needleworkers are less active, and any deceptive action they manage to carry out in has results that are decidedly negative. Therefore, while the female needleworkers are constructive, the male needleworkers are destroyers. The male needleworkers do not arouse empathy in the reader as do Princess Benedetta, Pellegrina, and Rosa. Uncle Seneca is

weak and disturbed, and the Councilor Mathiesen is malicious and manipulative. In fact, both Uncle Seneca and the Councilor are evil characters.

Like many of the characters associated with needlework, Uncle Seneca has a dual identity. Blixen portrays female duality as positive and liberating, but Uncle Seneca's duality results in nothing but distortion and destruction. Uncle Seneca studied medicine as a young man but was dissuaded by his family, who felt such a career was beneath him. As a result, he now lives in a world of dreams and rarely leaves his comfortable home. He has "various small hobbies with which he passed his time: he collected butterflies and was clever at stuffing birds. He also did needlework and would bring his cross-stitch to the fireside" (155).

In keeping with his love of cross-stitch, Uncle Seneca has an alternate identity that may or may not have a basis in reality. After a walk in the rain, he seems feverish and reveals that he believes himself to be Jack the Ripper. He describes his crimes and explains that they began in his dreams. Night after night he dreamed of a certain street in London, bought a map, and found the street. Then his dreams became more vivid and "in the end [he] understood that [he] had to do it" (165). Blixen does not provide a resolution as to whether or not Uncle Seneca is truly Jack the Ripper. However, there is no real need for a solution. Uncle

Seneca's implicit belief in the truth of this alter ego leaves no doubt that the duality and deception associated with Uncle Seneca is destructive and negative.

To Blixen, deceptiveness in women is a praiseworthy trait. Deceptive women achieve positive results. However, the deception and manipulation Councilor Mathiesen practices upon a pair of young lovers can hardly be praised and results in death and unhappiness. Councilor Mathiesen "when alone of an evening . . . did needlework in cross-stitch" (360). The Councilor is a manipulator. In his needlework, he can pull the threads and neatly arrange and rearrange his figures.

In the tale, he abandons his needlework for a living canvas, and as Langbaum writes, "tries to turn life into an artwork" (113), or perhaps a piece of needlework. In the past, he destroyed his wife, who died insane, through some type of "subtle psychological aggression" that turned on the obscure importance of a yellow pansy (Langbaum 112). He now manipulates the relationship of the young poet Anders Kube and Fransine, a beautiful young widow (387). At first, the Councilor wants the young couple to fall in love and marry. However, he decides to marry Fransine himself after she and Anders fall in love, and confides this intention to Anders for "a bit of drama" (387). During the Councilor's engagement, he delights in the fact that the young couple are suffering, because it will have a good effect upon

Anders's poetry. On the eve of his wedding he attempts to stage an erotic scene in Fransine's garden by reading her a scene from the novel Wally, die Zweiflern, wherein Wally, who is to marry a man she does not love, appears naked before the man she does love in a sort of symbolic marriage. The Councilor hides in the garden and is overjoyed when Fransine arrives wearing only her cloak, but his carefully planned scene goes awry when Anders arrives drunk and desperate, shoots the Councilor, repulses Fransine, and flees. Perceiving the Councilor's manipulative nature, Fransine smashes in his head with a stone. This end--his death--is the only way to end the Councilor's cruel manipulations.

Thus, in Blixen's fiction, men who do needlepoint are characters to avoid. To Blixen, male and female should be separate and opposite. In Shadows on the Grass, she writes that in order "to form and make up a Unity, in particular a creative Unity, the individual components must needs be of different nature" (3-4). Therefore, it is not proper for a man to intrude upon the female province of needlework, because this intrusion blurs the differences that separate the sexes.

Therefore, the nature of Blixen's male needleworkers suggests that, within the world of her tales, only a male who is warped would take up needlework. There is a certain amount of uneasiness in the townspeople's reaction to the

Councilor's embroidery: "when alone of an evening he did needlework in cross-stitch; but then there was no reason why, in his position, he should give up any pleasant pastime in life for the sake of conventionality" (360). The townspeople's careful rationalizations indicate uneasiness. In saying that "there was no reason why" Blixen suggests that there is a reason why the Councilor should not do needlework. Blixen believes that men should not stray into female territory. Uncle Seneca and Councilor Mathiesen, who both lead sheltered and comfortable existences enlivened by cross-stitch and hobbies, are examples of the feminized male. Both characters are disturbing and destructive and are obviously not designed as models to emulate.

In "Oration at a Bonfire," Blixen says that "it is of course good and useful if a young man can sew on a button or darn a sock. But in reality one cannot teach a boy needlework--in his hands the work changes character and rushes on toward a goal" (Dag 76). This analysis is linked to the basic distinction Blixen sees between men and women--that men are to do and women are to be (Dag 73-75). In Blixen's tales, male hands change the character of the associations linked to needlework. For a woman assigned exclusively to the sphere of being, needlework is not work but a means of operating undercover that allows her to do while the world only sees her being. In this way, a female needleworker becomes an "active and significant" woman who

achieves positive results through deception.

Neither Uncle Seneca nor Councilor Mathiesen is an "active and significant" character in the same sense as their female counterparts because neither achieves anything that is positive. As men, they should belong to the sphere of doing. Needlework and its deceptive possibilities should be unnecessary. However, both Uncle Seneca and the Councilor have trouble doing, and any action they do undertake has negative and destructive consequences. After Uncle Seneca's family prevents him from pursuing a medical career, he immerses himself in trivial hobbies. Soon, he can only do when guided by dreams and delusions. If his alter ego is a delusion, then he only imagines that he has taken action as Jack the Ripper, and if he is Jack the Ripper, his actions are still inspired by dreams (165). In either scenario, the results he achieves are horrific. Like Uncle Seneca, the Councilor is a man of independent means who has no real occupation, but instead of retreating into a dream world, he becomes a cruel and unconscionable manipulator. This manipulation is a form of action, but it also allows the Councilor to withdraw from a normal existence. His only form of doing is to do things to other people in a cold and calculating manner so that he may observe their reactions. All his experience is vicarious. He is constantly an on-looker. Through such action he produces insanity, death, and unhappiness.

Thus, neither Uncle Seneca nor Councilor Mathiesen can be considered an "active and significant" character. Both men take up needlework as something to do, not as a means of doing something positive, as women employ it. "Active and significant women" are associated with dual identities and intrigue. Councilor Mathiesen engages in manipulative intrigue and Uncle Seneca has a double identity, but neither male needleworker can be said to be "active and significant" because their actions are characterized by negation and destruction.

Blixen has woven descendants of Penelope into the tapestry of her own fiction. These characters are diverse but can be categorized according to sex. These categories are carefully mapped out in the speech "Oration at a Bonfire" and executed in various tales. The female characters who engage in intrigue and duality are "active and significant" and achieve specific and positive results. Male characters are incapable of the female approach to needlework, and those men who do engage in it are weak, warped, and destructive. In Blixen's fiction, Penelope has many daughters to be proud of, but no sons.

CHAPTER TWO

TAILORING A SELF

Karen Blixen sums up a prevalent view of needlework when she says that "needlework has never been viewed as actual work," even though "women have created many beautiful and lasting things in needlework" (Dag 76). Obviously, Blixen is not in accordance with this view. To her, needlework is an art that offers women not only the opportunity to be deceptive like Penelope, but also the opportunity to have a voice and to be expressive and creative like Philomela and Arachne. Clothing is a product of needlework, and therefore is an extension of needlework with similar possibilities. In Blixen's works, clothing oneself is another little-regarded art form that, like needlework, offers women expressive and creative opportunities.

In "Oration at a Bonfire" needlework and clothing are presented as concurrent examples which illuminate Blixen's premise that the difference between the sexes is based upon the perception that a woman's function is to be while a man's is to do. For the "active and significant woman" needlework was "an activity pursued while far greater work was being prepared" (Dag 76). But in the hands of a man, needlework "changes character and rushes on towards a goal"

(Dag 76). In a similar fashion, Blixen states that

> clothes play a greater role for a woman than for a man. It is said that women adorn themselves for men or that they adorn themselves for one another, but I think that neither is quite true. A woman's clothes are an extension of her own being. (Dag 76)

Therefore, from Blixen's point of view, a woman generally dresses for herself and her clothing is an integral part of her identity and a man generally views clothing as something that is incidental and independent of his being.

In her essay, Blixen then reiterates the differences between men and women and furthers the link between needlework and clothing by comparing the activities of a little boy and a little girl. The boy can learn to darn a sock, but he cannot not truly learn needlework because to him an "activity that does not lead to any facit seems strange . . ." (Dag 76). When he enthusiastically pastes together a cardboard farmyard, it is "the facit . . . that interests him" (Dag 76). The little boy has no interest in the process that produces the cardboard farm, it is only a means by which he achieves the result he desires. In building the cardboard farm, he constructs a tangible product that had no previous existence. The little girl is different. For her, the process outweighs the importance of the product. When she dresses and undresses her dolls, "there is no visible result of the activity, but she has

lived and lived intensely" (Dag 77). She is not distressed by the fact that she has not produced something that is new. Needlework functions in a similar manner. For the "active and significant" women the process of engaging in needlework was often far more important than the project she completed. Therefore, the little girl can become an needleworker, but the little boy cannot.

It is hardly a coincidence that the little girl who can learn needlework is pictured dressing and undressing dolls. There are many other activities that do not lead to any given facit. However, Blixen chooses to have her involved in a form of play that involves clothing. Play is acknowledged as preparation for life. The little girl will some day dress herself as she dresses her dolls and live intensely in the process. She will also learn skills like weaving and needlework that will allow her to sew for her dolls in the present and for herself in the future. Both clothing and needlework will provide her with a means of living intensely. Therefore, needlework and clothing are motifs that interplay with one another in Blixen's works.

The girl is associated with both needlework and dressing to stress the importance of these activities not only to women, but also to each other. Clothing would not exist without needlework. Furthermore, although it has many creative possibilities, the creation and decoration of clothing has always been a primary purpose of weaving and

needlework. Even Penelope was working upon a funeral shroud to clothe Laertes upon his death (Od II,99).

In Blixen's tales many women create and decorate clothing through weaving and needlework. In Out of Africa, the native girls embroider their tanned leather garments with beads (143). The peasant women in "The Poet" (SGT) wear "gold-embroidered caps" (369). Adelaide embroiders her handkerchiefs with a coronet in "Copenhagen Season" (266). The red and blue cotton Rosa weaves in "Peter and Rosa" (WT) will almost certainly be used to fashion clothing (148). The "first privilege" of the nuns in "The Blank Page" (LT) who weave linen is to provide sheets for royal beds, but the linen was probably sewn into clothing as well (102). In "Anna" (CN) nuns of another convent "cut and sewed little frocks, cloaks, and caps for [the] Virgins, saints and Bambinos, and they were so inventive and so clever with their needles that great cathedrals in Spain and Paris were their customers . . ." (192). As Madame Lola in "The Dreamers," Pellegrina Leoni sews and trims hats. In "Echoes" (LT), Pellegrina clothes a doll for Isabella. She "purchased lace and silk ribbons and made the doll's frock a replica of the frock of her own greatest role. In old days she had been clever with her needle, she lost herself in embellishing the wax doll . . ." (178). This suggests that Pellegrina sewed her own clothing in her days as an opera star. Thus, clothing is a literal extension of both

needlework and weaving, because it is a product of both needlework and weaving.

When focusing on needlework like Penelope's tapestry, which was "an activity pursued while far greater work was being prepared," the needlework itself is relatively unimportant and immaterial. However, as demonstrated, needlework is also a means of expression and creation, and in such instances the needlework itself becomes highly important. Philomela's tapestry, for example, revealed the crimes of Tereus and her desire for vengeance to her sister Procne. Her tapestry gave her a voice and allowed her to express herself. Arachne expressed her opinion to the goddess Athena in no uncertain terms by weaving a tapestry which catalogued the criminal actions and shameful deeds of the gods. Therefore, clothing, which, like tapestry, is a product of needlework and weaving, also demands consideration as a medium expressive of a woman's being, self, and identity.

In her fiction, Blixen establishes a nexus between female sewing, female clothing, and female identity. For example, in "The Deluge at Norderney," when Miss Malin Nat-og-Dag makes the "spiritual revolution" (22) from "fanatical virgin" (18) to "grand courtesan" (21), she takes the precepts of the Bible and "resolutely turns them inside out, as a woman will a frock the colours of which have disappointed her by fading" (21-22). From her youth, Miss

Malin has derived her identity from the Bible. She has clothed herself in its precepts. The construction of her new identity is linked to both needlework and clothing. When a woman "turned" a frock, she ripped out the seams, reversed the cloth, and then used her needle to create a new dress.

Sabine, the heroine of Blixen's marionette comedy The Revenge of Truth, is another character who implicitly links sewing, clothing, and self. In her first speech, Sabine says: "I tell you, father, I'm unhappy here, and I won't go on being unhappy. I'm disgusted with life in Edam in the same way as I am with a dress that doesn't fit me" (183).[14] A dress that does not fit must be re-fitted and sewn so that it will fit. If Sabine's metaphor of life as an ill-fitting dress is extended, the action Sabine is about to take to change her life may be equated with tailoring or sewing. Like Miss Malin, Sabine plans to take action to change or re-tailor her existence and identity. Metaphorically, she intends to make the dress that represents life fit properly. Sabine's metaphor demonstrates that, as the product of needlework, clothing is as much a metaphor and means of female action and expression as needlework itself.

In fact, clothing is an important means of expression, regardless of whether or not a woman has sewn her clothing with her own hands. In choosing what she will wear and how she will wear it, a woman is still exercising creative power

and expressing herself. In "Oration at a Bonfire" Blixen notes that it "is said that women adorn themselves for men or that they adorn themselves for one another, but I think that neither is quite true. A woman's clothes are for her an extension of her own being" (Dag 76).

Since society has assigned women exclusively to the sphere of being, clothing is of far greater importance to women than to men. Laertes, for example, has to be reminded not to wear whatever comes to hand, and, like most men, probably views clothing as incidental. In a letter to her brother, Thomas Dinesen, Blixen wryly reveals how important her clothing is to her:

> I wish I had something other than rags to wear, but I haven't, partly because of being poverty stricken, partly because you can't get anything out here that is at all fashionable. If only your Lilian could buy me something. It is amazing how much clothes mean; perhaps I value them too highly, but nothing,--be it illness, poverty, or loneliness or other misfortunes, distresses me more than having nothing to wear; and I have never been brought so low that I have not been cheered at the prospect of a new hat!!--which is probably utterly idiotic. . . . (Letters 97)

References to clothing are scattered through the letters Karen Blixen wrote home. She describes her clothing to her mother in careful detail. The meaning and importance of

women's clothing is discussed with her sister, Elle. A letter to Ingeborg Dinesen even contains what Blixen describes as "a sketch of my dress" (Letters np).[15]

In her biography of Karen Blixen, Judith Thurman describes Blixen's love of clothing and the 1919 "shopping spree" she enjoyed in Paris (160). In addition to having her shoes made by Hellstern's, Blixen had "a mannequin made for her at Pacquin's, chose several stylish hats at the Maison Lewis, and left her measurements with Madame Dupré, the celebrated corsetière of the Place Vendrôme" (160).

However, Thurman also takes care to point out that Blixen was not a slave to the changing modes of fashion. In fact, she often dressed according to her own taste and in despite of fashion. Thurman makes reference to "strange clothes and makeup" worn in both Africa and Denmark and says that her "elegance was a thing of her own invention" (197). Blixen's clothes were "ideas, metaphors, and as an old grande dame she would actually give them names" (197). Denys Finch Hatton's biographer, Errol Trzebinski quotes Rose Cartwright, a frequent guest at the farm in Kenya, who remembered

> . . . that Tania's method of dressing was "highly individual." "She wore simple cotton frocks. They were quite plain. I recall our wearing our sashes round our hips with large bows but she wore hers with the waist where it should be and the skirt at calf length rather

than the dernier cri which was shorter." (215)

Blixen displayed unconventionality and individuality by altering the conventions. She made her clothes her own, an extension of herself, not merely a reflection of "the dernier cri."

Thurman also describes Blixen's habit of dressing in "town" and "country" incarnations. In 1939, Hudson Strode, an American writer, came to visit Rungstedlund. Strode had met Karen Blixen

> only the week before when they had lunched together at the Yacht club on the Langelinie--she dressed in a smart suit with a fox boa and a Paris hat--and he had not at first recognized her in her country incarnation. Her hair was tied in a pigtail with a grosgrain ribbon; she wore a pair of old flannel trousers and two black sweaters, with a black woollen "fascinator" around her neck. Her face was scrubbed of rouge and kohl . . . . (Thurman 298)

Blixen obviously used her clothing to express different moods, personas, and incarnations that were all aspects of her identity.

In "Carnival," one of her earliest tales, Blixen clearly equates female self-expression with female clothing. In the tale, Mimi tells her sister Polly that she is unhappy even though she is married to the man she loves:

> If Julius and I were lovers, and met twice a week in

> his flat, as other people do, I should still have five days in which to be myself a little. Now in the way in which we are living together I have no peace in my own house. All my existence becomes nothing but being in love, all my thoughts turn round one single person, there is not sense in it, it is not living. (63)

Polly listens sympathetically and then makes a revealing response: "'And your frocks and your hats?'" (63). It is an obvious and acknowledged fact that does not require explanation between the sisters (and, by extension, all women) that one way to be and express oneself is through one's hats and one's frocks and one's clothing in general.

Clearly, then, Blixen equated clothing with female expression. In Titania, her biography of Karen Blixen, Parmenia Migel notes that Blixen "loved hats. Every hat, she said, should be a kind of outgrowth of its wearer's mood: flamboyant, seductive, droll, challenging--an added dimension to one's personality" (226).[16] In her memoir of Blixen, Clara Svendson recalls that when Karen Blixen was "complimented on her looks by an acquaintance, she replied 'Well, I did attend art school in Paris, you know'" (153). Clearly, Blixen felt that a woman should and could exercise her artistic skills to express herself.

This does not mean that clothing inevitably provides the key to the ultimate and innermost truths of a woman's self, but that a woman chooses her clothing to express

certain facets of her self. Through clothing she can project a certain identity, suggest a certain mood, or express a certain idea. These elements are all facets of her being. Of course, there is also the possibility that a woman might use her clothing to create or express a mood, idea, or identity that is, in fact, contrary to her being or her self. Clothing has as many deceptive possibilities as tapestry. It can be used to conceal as well as to reveal.

However, when used to wholly conceal identity, clothing no longer fulfils its artistic purpose. Blixen writes that artists "have a different relationship to their work than men in general and here they approach the female modus vivendi. Art is an extension of the artist's own being and his work does not really lie beyond him but is himself" (Dag 77). Therefore, feminine clothing that lies completely beyond the nature of the wearer and is not an extension of her being violates the form of Blixen's formula for an artist.

Women have not been "great artists save in those areas where they do not create a work of art but can themselves be said to become works of art--that is, as actresses, singers or dancers" (Dag 77). But, the "average woman is more of an artist than the average man," and the way in which she dresses herself is an expression of her artistic ability (Dag 77). Thus, it does not seem likely that women will violate art by dressing in a way that is completely alien to

their natures because of the "female modus vivendi" that places such emphasis upon being and creating one's self (Dag 77).

Lady Flora Gordon, the heroine of "The Cardinal's Third Tale," dresses in accordance with her self throughout the story. While in Rome, Lady Flora meets the Cardinal who reflects that her

> . . . attire was always costly, but severe in colour and style and never embellished with a silk ribbon, a bow or any of the falbalas by which our own ladies manifest not only a charming disposition, but the wish to charm. Her only jewels were a single row of pearls, an heirloom in her family. . . . (75)

Interestingly enough, the Cardinal, who is obviously a wise man, is very much aware of the fact that women use their clothing to "manifest" aspects of themselves.

Lady Flora's clothing illustrates facets of her self. She dislikes her body and herself and is determined to isolate herself from humanity and, especially, from men. Her severe clothing indicates that she does not wish to be approached. The pearls in her necklace are associated with the moon and the virgin goddess Diana. Thus, in her attire, Lady Flora expresses a determination to remain isolated and virgin. She is, however, proud of her Scottish heritage and occasionally dresses in what the Italian Cardinal calls "garments of particular colour and pattern" that hold great

significance to "the noble houses of Scotland" (75). Lady Flora wears the tartan to express her pride in being a Scot from a noble house.

It is only after she kisses the foot of the great stone statue of St. Peter in the Basilica and contracts syphilis that Lady Flora comes to realize that she is part of the great mosaic of humanity and that she cannot exist in isolation. Ironically, syphilis saves her and offers her a new sense of being. Faced with the revelation that she is indeed a member of the human race and does not exist in isolation, Lady Flora synthesizes a new identity for herself. The Cardinal meets her again and notes the change in her:

> She had become extremely thin, and so looked still taller. She no longer had her brilliant red hair, but bore a most elegantly dressed wig. Her silk frock, costly as ever, had a choice and tasteful trimming of ribbons and lace. (97)

Her clothing reflects the changes that have taken place within her. She no longer isolates herself from any part of humanity, she no longer wears pearls associated with the virgin goddess, and she allows an old gentleman at the spa to kiss her hand. Like Malin Nat-og-Dag, she has changed from a fanatical virgin to a spiritual courtesan, and her clothes express this new identity. Clearly, in this tale Blixen equates clothing with female expression.

In "The Deluge at Norderney" Miss Malin's goddaughter, Countess Calypso von Platen Hallermund, uses clothing to express her new-found identity. Calypso is an orphan whose uncle, the decadent, homosexual Count Seraphina, dressed her in boys' clothing from her childhood. When Calypso reaches puberty and it becomes apparent that she is indeed female, the Count rejects her utterly and completely. Calypso is in despair. Like her clothing, her sense of self has been completely dictated and defined by Seraphina.

Calypso decides upon self-mutilation in order to conform to Seraphina's world. Robert Langbaum notes that she "decides to do physically what so many women have done psychologically" (63). She wanders into the forgotten boudoir of Seraphina's grandmother, where the walls are decorated with a mural of naked nymphs pursued by satyrs, undresses, and approaches the mirror with a hatchet. However, she realizes that her reflected body is like that of the desirable nymphs. This realization is a great revelation, and Calypso feels "a great harmony" (48).

The concept of identity is linked to vision throughout Calypso's story. When Seraphina realized that he must acknowledge that Calypso is female, "he turned his eyes away from her forever and annihilated her" (44). Calypso has derived her identity from Seraphina's vision of her and he has envisaged her as a boy in boys' clothing. When Seraphina and his court of boys reject her because she no

longer conforms to their vision of her, Calypso knows that she does not exist because "nobody ever looked at her" (45). She has no self-image of her own. Seraphina has been the mirror which she looked to in order to define herself. However, when she looks into the mirror in the boudoir, Calypso sees herself and creates her own vision of her identity.

Calypso abandons not only the idea of self-mutilation, but her boys' clothing as well. These clothes belonged to Seraphina's vision of her and are now rendered invalid. She "spent the night in the room. She put on and took off one after the other of the court robes, the pearl strings, and diamonds" (48). Calypso is engaged in choosing the clothing that will allow her to express her new vision of herself. In accordance with her own vision of self, Calypso now determines how others will see her. She chooses "a great yellow-brocade frock" (49), and simply leaves the castle. She has created her own vision of self, chosen a means of expressing it and is free.

Calypso does not run from Angelshorn in defeat and despair because Seraphina has annihilated her. In her new gown, Calypso walks out of the castle and over the moors, singing a hymn and "altering it as to the personal pronoun only" (50)--that is, she substitutes herself for God. She has fulfilled the destiny suggested by her name and become a beautiful goddess-nymph. She leaves Angelshorn in triumph

because she has envisioned her own identity by looking in the mirror and has manifested this identity for all the world to see by dressing herself in clothes of her own choosing.

Calypso allows her godmother to tell her tale uninterrupted. At one point, though, the girl "turned her wild eyes towards the narrator and began to listen with a new kind of interest, as if she herself were hearing the tale for the first time" (46). However, it does not matter if Miss Malin alters the tale because the story is "to the heroine herself a symbol, a dressed-up image of what she had in reality gone through, and she acknowledged it by her clear deep glance at the old woman" (46).

However, despite Blixen's emphasis on clothing as a means of expression, clothing shares some of the deceptive qualities of needlework. Tapestries simultaneously contain two pictures. By virtue of dressing to emphasize a single facet of her nature or to convey a certain mood, a woman may, intentionally or unintentionally, be disguising another element of herself. In this way, she is creating an illusion and dealing in duality by both revealing and concealing elements of her self. In "The Deluge at Norderney" the Cardinal perceives this duality during a discussion of clothing with Miss Malin. He says that the "witty woman" wears a "costume" that "reveals something in her spirit or heart which the conventions of her everyday

life conceal" (26).

Costume in the context of carnival suggests fantastic garments designed to disguise and conceal. The Cardinal strengthens such associations by speaking of "the hideous long-nosed Venetian mask" (26). Clothing, like needlework, is a tool that women can use to disguise and conceal themselves to attain their own ends. In Out of Africa, Blixen writes that the Somali women "listened attentively to descriptions of the manners, education, and clothes of white ladies, as if out to complete their strategic education with the knowledge of how the males of an alien race were conquered and subdued" (159).

Blixen recognizes that the Somali women are not alone in using clothing to deceive and subdue men. In her essay "Oration at a Bonfire" Blixen describes the first "sly" feminists who put on "a costume which intellectually or psychologically represented a male" and showed the world that they could pass an examination, defend a doctoral dissertation, and perform an operation just as well as any male candidate aspiring to a high post" (Dag 80). By wearing disguises, these women conquered and subdued the males who had refused them entry to "the ancient citadels of males, the strongholds of the church, science and law" (Dag 80). These costumes might actually have been male clothing or simply female clothing that suggested the masculine by its style, colour, and cut.

However, although Blixen felt that such costumes were once useful, the days when disguise was necessary are part of the past:

> But today, woman has sprung out from the wooden horse and walks within the walls of the citadels. And she has certainly such a firm footing in the old strongholds that she can confidently open her visor and show the world that she is no disguised rogue. (Dag 80)

In other words, a woman should be able to dress herself in accordance with her own perceptions of her identity. Ideally, clothing should reveal and not conceal the woman who wears it.

In fact, this is the Cardinal's premise. In "Deluge" he specifies that costume is used to reveal the concealed. Paradoxically, costume, though a form of disguise, can reveal as well as conceal. Costume can be defined simply as "a woman's ensemble of dress" (OED). In this instance clothing and costume are synonymous. However, costume can also be defined as "the prevailing fashion in coiffure, jewellery, and apparel of a period, country, or class" or "a suit or dress characteristic of a period, country or class" (OED).

If one dons clothing from a period, country, or class that is not one's own, then one is in costume. However, one is not necessarily in disguise. Judith Thurman notes that in "Carnival" the guests have "used their costumes to

express, in a stylized manner, a truth about their real natures" (213). However, despite their costumes, the guests at the party have no trouble recognizing one another. From such a vantage point, costume and clothing are separated by such a fine line that the distinction becomes imperceptible. Thus, costume, like clothing, may be worn by a women to communicate moods, opinions, images and other aspects of her identity to the world.

Karen Blixen's own adherence to such a dress code is seen in Shadows on the Grass when she describes the Prince of Wales's visit to the Kenyan farm (37). The dress Blixen wore to receive him secures a description that far surpasses the description of the Prince! (SG 37-39). Blixen did not appear in the fashionable chemise dress of the twenties--which she describes as "nothing but two vertical lines starting below the armpits and cut off above the knee" (SG 37). Instead, Blixen "had Pacquin [a celebrated Parisian clothier's establishment] make her an evening dress of white taffeta with a cinched waist, panniers, stiff petticoats, and an alluring décolletage" (Thurman 197). This dress could be classified as a costume.

In Shadows on the Grass, Blixen writes that she had "no real idea" of European fashion after living in Africa for four years" (37). Therefore, she asked Pacquin's designers to make her frock and to "follow their own notions about what would be truly chic" (37). Upon receiving the dress,

Blixen saw that "they had had the good sense to make me . . . a so-called robe de style not likely to go out of fashion, with a hooped skirt of great fullness in silver brocade" (37).

However, Judith Thurman states that the dress was made to Blixen's specifications, and Blixen claims that the style of the gown was serendipitous--merely the result of the Pacquin's fortuitous "notions." Upon reflection, it is rather hard to believe that the aristocratic dress with its eighteenth-century hoop, panniers, petticoats, and silver brocade was only a happy accident.[17]

What, then, was Blixen striving to create or express through this dress? Thurman writes that the dress was a "reference to those days when 'woman was . . . a work of art, the product of centuries of civilization and you talked of her figure as you talked of her salon, with the same admiration one gives to the achievement of a skilled and untiring artist'" (197). Thurman is quoting a speech from one of Blixen's tales--"The Old Chevalier."

However, the Chevalier may not be a trustworthy narrator. Susan Hardy Aiken, for example, writes that because the Chevalier is generally taken as a "sympathetic portrait of the old roué," critics have been inclined to "take von Brackel at his word, to accept him, unproblematically, as a privileged interpreter of events he recounts, and to read him as [Blixen]'s double" (120-121).

Aiken believes that Blixen uses the Chevalier to imply "a direct continuity between the condition of prostitution and that of 'femininity' as it has been traditionally construed, both being grounded in a woman's service as the endlessly desirable object . . ." (121). Thus, accepting the Chevalier's portrayal of women as objets d'art of art as a complete explanation for the style of Blixen's frock is problematic.

There is art at work in Blixen's robe de style in the sense that "art is an extension of the artist's own being," but the dress does not allude solely to woman as an objet d'art (Dag 77). The dress makes a stronger allusion to the eighteenth century and the aristocratic. It is well known that Blixen felt a great affinity with the aristocratic class. She compared her life in Africa to the life of the eighteenth-century English aristocrat:

> Life out there was, I believe, rather like the 18th Century England: one might often be hard up for cash, but life was still rich in many ways, with the lovely landscape, dozens of horses and dogs and a multitude of servants. (Walter "The Art of Fiction" 51)

In the white Pacquin dress, Karen Blixen symbolizes her perception of her life and position in Africa--that of the great eighteenth-century land owner.

In Out of Africa, Blixen writes that the Natives of

Africa have only one real use for the white man: "They can turn [him] into a symbol" (98). Wearing her eighteenth-century dress, Blixen adopts the process she attributes to the natives and turns herself into a symbol for her guests and her squatters. Amongst women clad in the minimal clothes of the twenties, Blixen stood out and symbolized another way of living. She was a woman in a costume. She represented the great paternalistic eighteenth-century landowner who stood for law and sustenance to his dependent people.

Errol Trzebinski writes that this "fealty, the whole system of squatter and landlord and its concept, is evident throughout [Blixen's] works of fiction, and as the 'lord of the Manor' she controlled, worked and handled the estate, played her part, responding to the full" (170). It is this system of fealty and this devotion to the natives that inspired the white dress.

Blixen's solidarity with the natives is further stressed when they compliment her on the dress. She writes "that it pleased the hearts of my people to see me, among the lank women of the dinner party, suddenly swell out to an unexpected voluminousness" (38). The natives' approval of the gown indicates their acceptance of the symbol Blixen has created. The Pacquin dress simultaneously creates and expresses Blixen's self.

Clothing lost none of its importance as Karen Blixen

aged. In Titania, Parmenia Migel quotes a letter written in 1961 by Clara Svendson to Solita Solano describing Karen Blixen's preoccupation with her clothes:

> "You cannot imagine the rounds of fashion shows, inspection of what they have in the best shops, fittings etc., etc., etc., that precede any addition to her wardrobe! Even if she can hardly stand on her legs! And when it is all over, I myself feel like joining a nudists' camp." (271)

Karen Blixen obviously continued to select her clothing with an artist's attention to detail and mood. According to Blixen, the natives approved and understood her motivation in wearing the white dress. In Shadows on the Grass, Blixen seems extremely pleased with the result she achieved. However, her clothing-artistry was not always so well received or comprehended. Like all artists, Blixen had to risk rejection and lack of comprehension.

Blixen had "an old satin Pierrot costume, with a tulle ruff" that had been "made for one of the Dinesen childhood theatricals" (Thurman 368). She wore this costume to a party given for the literary group Heretica and was most disappointed when it failed to achieve the effect she desired. She "was especially annoyed with [the Heretica members] over the matter of the Pierrot costume (Migel 155). Migel recounts the following conversation: 'They were all assembled in the drawing room,' she poured out her

disappointment to Erling Schroeder on the telephone, 'when I flung open the door and appeared before them . . . as PIERROT! A stupid silence was the only reaction. The whole thing fell flat'" (155).[18] Miguel notes that it was "depressing" when people failed to respond, but she fails to explain what they were supposed to respond to and how they were supposed to respond.

Pierrot is a stock character from French pantomime who usually has a very white face and wears long, loose white clothing. His ancestors include characters from the Italian commedia dell'arte, such as Bertoldo, Pagliaccio, Pedrolino, and Piero. It was Molière who first used the name Pierrot for a naive peasant character in his play Don Juan, ou le Festin de Pierre. The early Pierrot was a rustic peasant, a clown or a buffoon, who combined common-sense and simplicity and was both credulous and sceptical (Sand 211).

However, the great French clown Jean-Baptiste Deburau (1796-1846) transformed Pierrot into a "personage pale as the moon, mysterious as silence, supple and mute as the serpent, lean and long as a pole . . ." (Sand 232). Deburau also claimed the role of Pierrot as a role for the mime. Previous Pierrots had taken part in dialogue, but Deburau's Pierrot spoke only through gesture and expression.[19] His performances were enormously popular and as Pierrot he had the ability to evoke both tears and laughter from his audiences. Deburau had many pupils, including his son who

permanently took over the performance of Pierrot in 1847. Thus, the pale, mysterious, and graceful Pierrot was popularized, and his more rustic characteristics were abandoned and forgotten.

This pale and mysterious Pierrot is most likely the Pierrot Blixen had in mind when she donned her costume. A "personage pale as the moon, mysterious as silence, supple and mute as the serpent, lean and long as a pole . . ." would be a fine accompaniment to the storyteller "Isak Dinesen," who was a member of "an ancient, idle, wild and useless tribe" (Sand 232, Hannah 60). In fact, the tragicomic character Pierrot even embodies the tragicomic style of many of Blixen's tales. The exact impression that Blixen wished to create with her Pierrot costume is still unclear, but obviously she did not wish to provoke "a stupid silence" (Miguel 155).

The failure of the Pierrot costume underlines the fact that in both Blixen's fiction and non-fiction the art of dressing seems to need informed auditors and interpreters to ensure and complete its success. The Cardinal is able to interpret and understand the significance of Lady Flora Gordon's clothes and the natives are able to appreciate the symbolism of Blixen's brocade dress. But without properly informed auditors and interpreters, a woman's expression of self will go unnoticed or unappreciated. Such lack of recognition and appreciation may be damaging to the woman in

question because her individuality will go unremarked.

The tragic outcome of "Alkemene" (WT) is partly due to the fact that Vilhelm fails to understand and interpret Alkemene's clothing. Alkemene is an orphan who is adopted by a parson and his wife, Gertrud. Like her name, Alkemene is pagan--a wild and fearless child who moves with a strange lightness and has a strong affinity with nature. The parson and his wife try to suppress these pagan qualities and give her a Christian upbringing, but Alkemene proves intractable.

Among other things, Gertrud complained that "Mene was too heedless about her clothes, and would take no more care of her Sunday gown, which she herself had made for her, than of her little faded weekday frocks . . ." (118). Such clothing is merely a constraint to Alkemene and offers no means of expressing any aspect of her self. Her reaction to the silk gowns of Vilhelm's dead mother is entirely different. Vilhelm recalls that

> She spread them out one by one and sat for a long time gazing at them, in the end she asked me to give her one. This was a dress of thick green silk with a yellow pattern on it; when I see it now it looks to me somewhat like a limetree in bloom." (118)

Alkemene recognizes some aspect of her identity in these gowns.

In the tale Alkemene has two separate identities that are at odds with the proprieties the Parson and his wife try

to school her in. The letter written by the old professor who arranges the adoption states that her parentage cannot be revealed, but certainly suggests that she is the illegitimate child of a wealthy and aristocratic parents. The Parson speculates that she may be only a child whom some "dancing and singing mamzell" wished to be rid of (109), but this theory is negated when she inherits a fortune in gold (122). As Robert Langbaum notes, Alkemene also embodies a fairy-tale heroine (182). She is a child of mysterious parentage and great beauty who comes the parsonage on a wild snowy night. She is graceful and musical. She imitates bird calls perfectly and fearlessly carries snakes in her hands. She inherits a great fortune in gold. As the heroine of fairy-tale, Alkemene should save the kingdom of the parsonage, marry her prince, and live happily ever after.

Thus, the green and yellow dress appeals to both the aristocratic and magical elements of Alkemene's identity. As the heroine of fairy-tale, she should wear silk and not the rough dresses sewn by Gertrud. Silk expresses the nobility of her nature. The colours of the dress are also important. Green, which is the fairy colour, strengthens Alkemene's association with magic and reinforces her affinity with nature. Yellow is linked to the gold that she will inherit, which is later described as "a pile of gold" (122).

Alkemene wears her green and yellow dress to walk in the woods with Vilhelm. She shows him the aspects of her

true self that are threatened by the parsonage. Alkemene relies on Vilhelm to rescue her from the world of the parsonage through marriage.[20] However, Vilhelm fails this Alkemene, just as Amphitryon fails the Alkemene of mythology. Shown the magical essence of Alkemene's being, Vilhelm can only reflect on what "ludicrous creatures girls are, who will be made happy by standing on top of a hill in a silk gown" (119). As Langbaum says, "everything about Alkemene is magical, yet the magic never bears magical results. Somehow the prince is lacking to awaken the sleeping princess with a kiss" (182). Vilhelm does not understand the significance of Alkemene's clothing and he makes no attempt to rescue her from the parsonage until its stultifying influence has destroyed her. Clearly, it is of paramount importance to have informed auditors by to understand and appreciate what is expressed through a woman's clothing. Without such an audience, the woman's creative energy will be spent for nothing and the consequences may be destructive.

However, despite such limitations, Blixen portrays clothing as a positive extension of weaving and needlework that is closely tied to a woman's sense of being. Even if a woman has not woven or sewn her clothing herself, choosing her clothing still allows her to tailor-make her identity by providing her with a means of expression and creation. The woman's audience, however, must be an informed one capable

of appreciating what she chooses to express. Given such an audience, a woman can use her clothing to proclaim her moods, her opinions, her loyalties, her ideas--in essence, herself--to the world.

CHAPTER THREE

PHILOSOPHIES AND DICHOTOMIES OF WOMEN'S CLOTHING

As an extension of needlework and its metaphoric possibilities, clothing should offer women both creative and deceptive opportunities. Through her tales, her silver brocade dress, her essays, and her Pierrot suit, Karen Blixen clearly demonstrates that she perceived and practised the creative and expressive means inherent in clothing. However, although Blixen recognizes the deceptive potential of clothing in her essays, no truly "active and significant" female characters like the needleworkers emerge from among the women who recognize the deceptive power of clothing in her tales (Dag 76). Even though clothing is a product of needlework, which has long been an exclusively female sphere, a woman's clothing has historically been both dictated and defined by society, which is dominated by men. Due to such social definition and dictation, women in Blixen's tales are unable to make successful use of their clothing as a means of active and positive deception. However, Blixen's attitude towards clothing is paradoxical. Both her fiction and her non-fiction contain a dichotomy. Blixen simultaneously portrays the imposed symbolic order of female clothing as both positive and empowering and negative and reductive.

Such double perception is seen in "The Old Chevalier" (SGT), which deals with both the power and the danger of clothing's established symbolism. The Chevalier is deceived by Nathalie's clothing because he interprets women's clothing according to an established symbolism. However, because the Chevalier's scheme reduces women to symbols, he is deeply shocked when he discovers that Nathalie is an individual who has used his symbolic order to deceive him. In fact, Nathalie is not really involved in an active deception. She is a partially drunk and thoroughly desperate girl, and she does not put on the dress of the prostitute, Marie, to deceive men into thinking her a prostitute, but, rather, to become one. She has no further motivation, and she gains nothing more than twenty francs.

However, despite Nathalie's lack of ulterior motives, the Chevalier thinks that he has been deceived when he learns that she is an innocent girl. He takes Nathalie for a prostitute because she is "highly rouged, with radiant eyes like stars" and is wearing a "black hat with ostrich feathers" and "a cloak of black lace" that is "faded at the edges into rusty brown" (90, 93). When von Brackel realizes that she is indeed an innocent, he is absolutely confounded: "I was waiting for her to come up and let me know when she would come back to me, and what I was to do" (102). He watches Nathalie re-dress herself and now refers to her clothing as "her shabby black disguise" (102).

Ironically enough, the old Chevalier has lectured his young auditor upon the functions of clothing earlier in the tale. His theme is that disguise was the purpose of clothing during his youth and that this purpose has now been lost:

> "What are the clothes that your ladies of these days are wearing? In themselves as little as possible--a few perpendicular lines, cut off again before they had time to develop any sense. There is no plan about them. They exist for the sake of the body, and have no career of their own, or, if they have any mission at all, it is to reveal.
>
> "But in those days a woman's body was a secret which her clothes did their utmost to keep. We would walk about in the streets in bad weather in order to catch a glimpse of an ankle. . . . Clothes then had a being, an idea of their own . . . all aimed at one thing: to disguise." (93-94)

The Chevalier enjoys contemplating such secretness and separateness, but does not recognize the empowerment that such qualities offered women. Despite the burden of his lecture, the Chevalier has evidently never considered the possibility that he might be fooled by clothing, even though he knows that its sole purpose is to disguise.

The Chevalier does not expect to be deceived because, according to his theory, the clothing that keeps woman

separate and secret also disposes of her individuality. Clothing makes women into objects and symbols that should be both easily recognizable and inviolate. Nathalie has violated his symbolic order of womanhood by appearing in clothes that symbolize the prostitute when she is an innocent. Upon meeting Nathalie, the Chevalier wonders at her beauty and grace "as one would wonder at finding a bunch of fresh roses in a gutter, no more" (91). His conception of a world wherein all women are instantly identifiable objects and symbols is too secure to be easily breached.

The Chevalier further expands upon his conception of the world by explaining that "woman was then a work of art, the product of centuries of civilization, and you talked of her figure as you talked of her salon" (94). Women "were more than a collection of individuals, they were symbols of the idea of Woman" (94). He believes that a little girl "was gradually, no doubt in accordance with very ancient rules, inaugurated into the rites of the cult, and finally ordained. Slowly the centre of gravity of her being would be shifted from individuality to symbol. . ." (95). The Chevalier sees no conflict in the coexistence of individuals and universal symbols.

Therefore, Nathalie is empowered by the Chevalier's view of women, and he is astounded when faced with the realization that she is an individual and not a type or a symbol identified by her clothing. Nathalie takes his money

and leaves him behind. However, the Baron can never put the memory of Nathalie behind him because she represents a critical breech to the integrity of his world. An artist friend who shows him the "prettiest thing" in his studio offers von Brackel a resolution. The "prettiest thing" is the skull of a young woman. It gleams whitely like Nathalie's skin, and the Baron imagines that the skull is really hers. It is "pure" and "safe" (107). Only in death is Nathalie safe to contemplate because she becomes an object that the Baron may easily categorize without the fear that she will threaten or escape from his declared definition.

Thus, although Nathalie does, in strict fact, deceive the Chevalier with her clothing, she is hardly an "active and significant" female character like the female needleworkers. She gains nothing but her twenty francs. The Chevalier is a representative of the way in which male dominated society has determined and defined the style and symbolism of female clothing. His reaction to the revelation that Nathalie has circumvented social dictum emphasizes the pervasive importance of such unwritten laws.

"The Old Chevalier" illustrates the entrenched and inviolate symbolism that has been assigned to clothing. Obviously, it will be very difficult for a woman to use clothing to express any aspect of herself in such a milieu. It would be like trying to express the idea that a wall is

white to the painter who knows that he painted it black. The Chevalier, for example, knows that Nathalie must be a prostitute because the clothing she wears is the clothing his society has designated to symbolize the prostitute. Obviously, a world in which clothing possesses entrenched and unalterable meaning does not provide a climate conducive to the use of clothing as a means of individual expression.

It seems possible, however, that such a social milieu might offer women prime opportunities for the practice of deception. If clothing is assigned a single and inviolate symbolism, society will not only be less likely to expect a woman to practice deception with her clothing, but also will be easier to deceive.[21] However, the deception would have to be sustained indefinitely, for if any unlucky woman were discovered using inviolate symbols to deceive men for her own ends, she would have to be destroyed and/or marginalized as Nathalie's individuality is in the Baron's "fantasie macabre" about the skull. This fantasy transforms Nathalie into a classifiable object--"the prettiest thing" in the studio (106-107). There is also the danger that an indefinitely sustained deception will overwhelm and destroy the identity it initially concealed.

In the "Invincible Slave-Owners" (LT), Blixen further emphasizes the difficulties and futilities that cluster round any woman's attempt to practice viable deception through clothing in a society where the style of her

clothing is dictated to her and the symbolism of her clothing is defined for her. In the tale, two sisters named Mizzi and Lotti practice an active deception upon the guests of a hotel in Baden-Baden. Like Nathalie, they are empowered by the roles and symbols society assigns to women. The sisters were born into the upper class but are poor and cannot afford to maintain their own home or to employ servants. As a result, they travel, but not as sisters in reduced circumstances. Instead, the sisters take turns playing the roles of mistress and maid. In Baden-Baden, Mizzi is a "young lady of the best society" and Lotti is her "dame de compagnie or governess" (51).

The sisters' clothing is an important factor in their success and is meticulously described. Mizzi's "slender, forceful, abundant figure was dressed, two or three years younger than her age, in the short skirts of a schoolgirl, and she wore her hair down her back" (52). She wears "white stockings and neat little shoes," "a white muslin frock with a pink sash," and "a black velvet ribbon around her neck" (52). Lotti wears "black silk, with a thin gold watch-chain down her narrow bust and blue glasses. She was severe in all her lines, the model governess or duenna" (53).

The sisters completely deceive the guests at the hotel and inspire romantic and unfounded stories. Based on her clothing, the old General staying at the hotel explains that "one does not need to be told" that Mizzi "is obviously the

victim of a jealous stepmother" (53). The General proclaims: "'It is both a deadly sin and a joke to dress up that young woman as a child'" (53).[22] In the General's view, in dressing Mizzi as a child, her step-mother transgresses against the sacred laws that define and determine what clothing a woman will wear and what that clothing will signify. The General is another incarnation of the old Chevalier.

It may seem like a victory to be able to use and manipulate the symbols created and perpetuated by men like the old General and the old Chevalier, but the sisters do not achieve any truly positive or lasting end. Moreover, their deception must be sustained indefinitely. The sisters may switch roles and hotels, but they must always engage in deception. They can never be themselves. Sadly enough, if the truth became public knowledge, Mizzi and Lotti would be ruined not only in the eyes of the world but in their own as well.

The sisters--especially Mizzi--have defined themselves according to the symbolism constructed by men like the old General and the old Chevalier. The symbolism that empowers them and makes their deception possible also traps them, for they cannot exist as individuals. In the woods, Mizzi voices her despair over her clothes to her sister: "'Next year they will be altogether impossible. Where will I show myself then? I shall have to sink into the ground, when, then, I

have no mantilla, no hat with ostrich feathers, no gown with a train on it . . .'" (60). Without the symbols that identify her as a great lady, Mizzi feels that she cannot be a great lady in her own eyes or the eyes of the world.

Although the sisters deceive the hotel guests, their victory is an empty one. They use the symbolism of clothing to create the illusion that they are what they are not, but in doing so they trap and destroy themselves. When Axel Leth, who has fallen in love with Mizzi, overhears the sisters talking in the woods and learns their secret, he labels them "the tragic sisters" (61). There is no escape for them. Axel foresees that "very likely next year, the parts would be interchanged, Lotti would be the slave-owner and Mizzi the slave . . . demure in the plain attire of a nurse, patient under the whims of her mistress" (67). The sisters are incapable of an existence in which they are not defined as "great, gentle ladies" by established symbols (61). Clothing and slaves are two of the most important of such symbols. Lotti and Mizzi are "partisans of an ideal," even though the ideal was created and perpetuated by external social forces (61).

Mizzi and Lotti are not alone in their adherence to this ideal. After her departure, an old English lady, who was "the most faithful of Mizzi's friends," takes Axel Leth driving and praises "the girl as a great lady in the bud, a maiden brought up on the high principles of the old world"

(66). The old lady is uncertain, "with the present state of politics, and the rebelliousness of youth itself, whether in a hundred years, there will still be such real ladies in the world, worthy of the worship of men" (66). The lady's use of the term "worship" recalls the restrictive religious imagery associated with woman, her dress, and her symbolic status in "The Old Chevalier." The irony of such statements is obvious. The "high principles of the old world" have become narrow and destructive.

The title of the tale--"The Invincible Slave-Owners"--also becomes highly ironic. The sisters are not slave-owners in any sense, but rather slaves to symbols created by society. They are invincible only in the sense that nothing can overcome their adherence to these symbols. Axel cannot play the role of the romantic hero, because no one can rescue them. The story ends with Axel gazing at a waterfall that is "a flight, a whirl, an incessant catastrophe" (67). This is obviously the fate of Lotti and Mizzi. Despite its success, their deception is futile and tragic. Neither the sisters nor Nathalie are "active and significant" women like the female needleworkers in Blixen's works.

"The Old Chevalier" and "The Invincible Slave-Owners" convincingly illustrate the irony of women being simultaneously empowered and defeated by the fact that their clothes are manifestations of male society. Although women's needlework is an exclusively female sphere, women's

clothing is not. Society has assigned or consigned needlework to woman and makes little attempt to regulate her use of this medium. Hawthorne sums up the view that needlework is a fitting way to occupy woman's hands and minds and no more. However, clothing is still of intense interest to society. Through clothing, society may define and designate the role and identity of woman, and she will not be allowed to make any serious deviations from the prescribed and established pattern.

However, the lack of "active and significant" characters who practice deception through clothing does not render the analogy between clothing and needlework invalid. It merely signals the need for further examination and consideration. In "Oration at a Bonfire," Blixen writes of the feminists who triumphed by using their clothing in deceitful ways. She also describes the way the Somali women listened to descriptions of white women's clothing in a manner which suggested they were accustomed to using clothing as deception (OA 159). Obviously, then, clothing can function as a means of positive deception in the same way as needlework but does not appear to do so with any frequency in Blixen's tales.

Such a conclusion requires further analysis. Upon reflection, a dichotomy of clothing will be perceived within Blixen's works. It is as if Blixen has taken on the role of the dual-visaged Roman god Janus and positioned herself

between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the twentieth century, women have control over their clothing. They have benefitted from the victory of "reform dress" that is ironically recounted in Blixen's 1926 essay, On Modern Marriage. Today "the young women who create the fashions" would not "dream of ruining their silhouettes with corsets" (42). In the twentieth century, young women themselves create and control fashions. In Daguerreotypes, it is a French lady who explains the new fashion of renunciation that arose in 1920 and had its inspiration in the First World War. Female clothing was "limited to the least possible." Women began to "cut their hair short" and, "became enamoured of renunciation and gave up luxury of all kinds" (54). The French lady further explains that "one no longer [sees] a real lady in a pâtisserie. 'And if we are invited out to dinner,' she said, 'we have a cup of consommé and three pieces of asparagus'" (Dag 54). Though born in the nineteenth century, Karen Blixen herself dressed as a twentieth-century woman who used clothing and costume interchangeably to create and express moods, ideas, and identities.

However, looking back into the nineteenth century,[23] which provides the setting for all but one of her tales. Blixen sees a world where men like the old Chevalier and the old General set the standards and symbols that determine and define women's clothing. Women were rarely free to dress for

and as themselves. Like Nathalie and the sisters Lotti and Mizzi, women were trapped in the imposed symbolism of their clothing--caught fast in a web that was not of their weaving. Lady Flora Gordon, the heroine of "The Cardinal's Third Tale," is a rich and independent woman and can dress as she pleases, but she is also the exception who proves the rule. Overall, women's clothing offered them little creative or deceptive freedom in the nineteenth century.

In her essays Blixen examines the way in which the nineteenth century defined and constrained women through clothing. Her ideas often seem to reflect the influence of Thomas Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, which purports to be a 'Philosophy of Clothes' (9). Sartor Resartus echoes the dichotomy of clothing seen in Blixen's works: "Clothes gave us individuality, distinctions, social polity; Clothes have made Men of us; they are threatening to make Clothes-screens of us" (32).[24] Blixen's philosophy differs from Carlyle's, of course, in that it is a philosophy of women's clothing. For example, Blixen believes that clothing can bestow the opportunity to express female identity as well as male identity, but clothing not only threatens to make women into objects but has already been used for such a purpose. However, despite the need for such modifications, Blixen's philosophy of clothing often seems to draw upon the tenets of Sartor Resartus.

Unfortunately, there is no absolute and definite proof

that Karen Blixen had read Sartor Resartus. However, she had read Carlyle's Heroes and Hero Worship, which is quoted and referred to in her letters (Letters 63). Blixen was a voracious reader who was interested in the Victorian Period. Her letters mention Dickens and Thackeray among others. It therefore seems likely that she would have read more than one of the works of the eminent Victorian prose prophet, especially Sartor Resartus, which is one of Carlyle's best known works. Sara Stambaugh identifies images borrowed from Sartor Resartus in Blixen's essay "Mottos of My Life." In a footnote, Stambaugh notes she "suspects that Blixen read Sartor Resartus as a child" (94-95, 121).

In "The Deluge at Norderney," Miss Malin announces "I myself have by now become aware of my identity: I am Mademoiselle Diogenes" (40). The Greek Cynic philosopher, Diogenes, was celebrated for his wit, so Miss Malin may be signalling her attitude towards life and acknowledging her own wit with this reference. However, the reference could also be an allusion to Carlyle's Professor Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, the philosopher-author supposedly responsible for the philosophy of clothes collected in Sartor Resartus.[25]

Like Blixen, Carlyle sees clothing as a means to express facets of one's identity. Clothing is that which the "Soul wears as its outmost wrappage" (4), and "spiritual idiosyncrasies unfold themselves in choice of Colour: if the

Cut betoken Intellect and Talent, so does the Colour betoken Temper and Heart" (28). Clothing is an art--the "tailor's art"--and the "Body and the Cloth are the site and materials whereon and whereby his beautified edifice, of a Person, is to be built" (28). This summarizes Blixen's own personal approach to clothing, as her silver brocade dress and her Pierrot costume demonstrate. Clothing allows a woman to express aspects of her soul or essential self. Using her clothing, a woman can engage in the symbolic building Carlyle describes and can construct the "edifice of a Person" she wishes to display to the world.

Both Blixen and Carlyle are also aware that clothing is not solely a matter of personal choice, but also a manifestation of society. Carlyle writes that clothing was "first spun and woven by Society" (163). Blixen applies the essence of this statement to women's clothing. In the essay "Daguerreotypes," she writes that there is "a mystical inner connection between the principles, ideals, ambitions, prejudices, and dreams of an age--and its sofas, bouquets, and women's hats" (19). Clothing is the synthesis of all the elements of an age, just as cloth is the synthesis of all the threads on a loom. Once cloth is woven, it is the sum of its parts, but it is practically impossible to separate it back into those parts.

However, Blixen does attempt to enumerate the "threads" on the loom of a particular society that has created a

particular mode of female dress. She explains that in late nineteenth-century Denmark, because the state was prepared to carry out the defence of Copenhagen, because the Czar of Russia was visiting Fredenborg Palace, because Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House had just opened at the Royal Theatre, and because Edison had invented the phonograph, her mother's friend "had to be photographed with a shy little smile, beneath a complex of braids, and curls, and in a dress with tucks, flounces, pleats and a train. . . when she married an admiral of the fleet" (19-20). The clothing worn by this young woman has been "woven and spun" by a specific society.

In the same essay, Blixen says that a "fashion always has some meaning" (55). Similarly, Carlyle states that "neither in tailoring nor in legislating does man proceed by mere Accident, but the hand is ever guided on by mysterious operations of the mind" (25). In other words, fashions are symbols assigned meaning by society. However, such symbols are not inviolate, as Carlyle demonstrates in his description of the decline of Church Clothes, which

> . . . have gone sorrowfully out at elbows: nay, far worse, many of them have become hollow Shapes, or Masks, under which no living Figure or Spirit any longer dwells . . . and the Mask still glares on you with its glass eyes in affectation of Life,--some generation and a half after Religion is quite withdrawn from it. (164)

There is no substance behind such symbols. They are relics of another age. They express the faith that was once poured into an ideal but is now gone. Carlyle implies that clothing is like religion, not only in that it represents ideals, but also in that it can become an empty facade.

The Church Clothes Carlyle writes about came into being during the Middle Ages, but by the nineteenth century they had been reduced to rags, and their symbolism was lost. In the second of her daguerreotypes, the story of Margrethe and Miss Sejlstrup, Blixen, too, compares the nineteenth century to Medieval Times. This comparison of nineteenth-century country estates and sixteenth-century country estates is reminiscent of Carlyle's Past and Present wherein nineteenth-century St. Ives is compared to the medieval monastery of Bury St. Edmund's. Blixen quotes Aldous Huxley who notes that the "'first thing that strikes one about the discomfort in which our ancestors lived is that it was mainly voluntary'" (Dag 47). Blixen then describes how the people in Norway of three hundred years ago, despite their ability to create beautiful jewellery, fine wooden carvings, and finely woven carpets, "thought nothing of sitting or lying in ways which according to our concepts were uncomfortable" (Dag 47). To our ancestors "physical well-being and comfort were without actual significance for ages past ages. It was rank--precedence; it was dignity, majesty, and pomp which were for them life's greatest values." To

demonstrate their superiority, kings, princes and cardinals lived in superhuman surroundings, and "for them it was well worth the effort. The need for physical well-being and comfort was in their eyes a weakness which they owed it to themselves to overcome" (Dag 49).

Obviously, this analogy may also be applied to clothing. Blixen writes that the "dress of the old upper class was honest and consistently ritualistic" and "in no way warmer or more practical than that of the common people; any superfluity which characterized it was symbolic." Women wore corsets because they were "an accepted symbol of fine true femininity."[26] Blixen strengthens the association with the old world by comparing the lady who could not "get into her corset without the help of a strong chambermaid" to a knight who could not "get into his armour without the help of his squire" (Dag 56). The armour the knight wears is put on to ride forth into battle. It is a symbol of his nobility and commands respect. The women of the "old upper class" viewed their corsets in much the same way. They were a symbol of nobility and empowerment.

The Somali women in Out of Africa have a similar attitude towards the cultural restrictions placed upon them. In observing these women, the narrator comes to understand "how my grandfather and great-grandfather were forced to their knees." The Somali women derive power from the appearance of conformity, but, in reality, do not sacrifice

their own autonomy:

> These daughters of a fighting race went through their ceremonial of primness as through a great graceful war-dance; butter would not melt in their mouths, neither would they rest till they had drunk the heart's blood of their adversary, they figured like . . . ferocious young she-wolves in seemly sheep's clothing. (158)

The Somali women are able to remain separate and incomprehensible in the eyes of men. Their adherence to established modes of dress and behaviour allows them to practice deception successfully and engage in "conquering the conqueror" and "extorting from the extortioner" (160).

However, in Blixen's daguerreotype the time when comfort was of no importance and the corset was viewed as noble and empowering is past. The daguerreotype is set in the nineteenth century, some time before Blixen's birth (1885), in what she calls "the time of transition" (Dag 57). It is interesting to note that as the time of transition is before 1885, it could well be the 1870's, which provides the setting for "The Old Chevalier," "The Invincible Slave-Owners," and "Copenhagen Season." In this age and these tales, the decline of what Carlyle called Church Clothes could easily be related to Female Clothes.[27] Like Carlyle's Church Clothes, women's clothes now exist in a new symbolic frame-work. The skirt, not the corset, is now of paramount importance.

Carlyle describes "all national or other sectarian Costumes and Customs" as entities that have "no intrinsic, necessary divineness or even worth; but have acquired an extrinsic one" (168). The skirt is such a garment, for in the nineteenth century, it was the "most sacred attribute of womanly nobility" because it clothed the "secret symbolic importance of the female leg" (26). Blixen discusses the skirt and the legs it covers in great detail. Various examples of the importance of the leg are given: an anecdote by Samuel Butler about a boy who thought women were one piece from the waist down, a poem by Carl Ploug in which the poet cannot bring himself to mention that the lady wore trousers (though he has no trouble dealing with her adultery), a novel by Karl Gjellerup in which the action is precipitated by the hero's overhearing another man admit that he has glanced up the heroine's ankles when helping her into the saddle, and an account of Blixen's own father's adamant disapproval of dresses that revealed legs and knees.

Through this plethora of examples, Blixen illustrates that it was men who determined, defined, and defended the standards of female dress and decorum during the nineteenth century. She further expands this point when she discusses the way in which "the men of the nineteenth century viewed their women" (Dag 32) as either angel, housewife, bayadère, or witch. A woman's clothing determined her classification. The angel and the housewife concealed their legs from men

beneath long skirts. The bayadère revealed hers but became an outcast from man's respectable world. The witch was unconstrained. She dared to exist independently outside the male world and did as she pleased with her legs. Therefore, clothing can be a reductive force that suppresses a woman's individuality and forces her to become an artificial embodiment of an ideal.

The veneration of the ideals represented by female clothing can be every bit as dangerous as the veneration of the ideals represented by Carlyle's Church Clothing. To her Aunt Bess, Karen Blixen writes that

> . . . there is something great and beautiful in every one of the ideals that through the ages humanity has set up and been uplifted by and rejoiced in, in the Valkyrie as in the nun and the housewife,--and something dangerous in every one of them. (Letters 367)

The danger is that the ideal will drain they individual of her vibrancy and leave behind an empty shell.

Such erasure of feminine individuality is discussed with benign indifference in "Tales of Two Old Gentlemen" (LT) by Matteo and Taddeo, two elderly widowers, who exchange various anecdotes about their experiences with women. Matteo describes the convent education that produces the most "dazzling and adorable woman of the world" (67). Because the convent has no mirrors, a girl will not know "whether she be plain or pretty" (67). The cells are

whitewashed, the nuns are habited in black, and the pupils are dressed in gray from head to toe. Clad in their gray uniforms, the convent girls are bereft of any tools that would allow them to construct an identity or to express themselves. Gray is an indeterminate colour, and the girls are condemned to dwell in indeterminacy for as long as they remain in the convent.

As a result of this regime, when a girl leaves the convent the mirror instantly becomes "her chief instructress and confidante; the knowledge of fashion, of silks, laces, and fans, becomes her chief study" (68). The old gentleman believes that the girl gazes into her mirror and adorns herself to attract a husband. However, he may be wrong. After all, mirrors are generally instruments of female self-discovery in Blixen's tales.[28] Such a girl may turn to silks and laces in an attempt to construct an identity that finally expresses some aspect of herself. After years of confinement and repression, she may be "dazzling" because all her suppressed individuality now rushes into the forefront (67). However, if Matteo and Taddeo speak for society in general, it is extremely unlikely that anyone will appreciate the individuality that such girls exert themselves to express.

Like the old Chevalier and the old General, the old gentlemen can only interpret the way in which the women adorn themselves according to their own frame of reference

by which women use clothing to attract men. Any identity and individuality that the young girl can manage to create and express within the confines of prevailing fashion will go unregarded by the old gentlemen. They do not see the girls as individuals, but as nameless types or as nicely manufactured products from the convent assembly line.

Out of Africa describes a similar erasure of individuality. In this instance the Somali women's adherence to imposed ritual and clothing is not seen as positive, but as negative and reductive. Blixen describes the effect adolescence has had on one of the young girls on the farm. As a little girl she was "an exceedingly bright and vivacious child" who had her hair shaved off in the "pretty fashion" of Somali girls (156). She rode the farm ponies, carried the narrator's gun, "ran wild with the Kikuyu Totos about the fishing pond," and "tucked up her skirts and galloped barefooted round the rushy bank with a landing net" (155-156). At this point, she personifies freedom and movement and thinks nothing of carelessly lifting her skirts to reveal her legs.

However, when the girl reaches puberty a "curious thing" happens. The other maidens "took her in hand, and scrupulously formed her into a young virgin, comme il faut" (155). The little girl is "transformed" and "possessed by the process of her transformation" (156). The narrator says it was

> . . . as if a heavy weight had been tied on to her legs, she took to walking slowly, slowly; she held her eyes cast down after the best pattern . . . Her hair was cut no more, and when the day came that it was long enough, it was, by the other girls, parted and plaited into a number of little pigtails . . . [and the] novice gave herself up proudly to all the hardships of the rite. . . . (156)

She now embodies the "virgin comme il faut" and, in essence, has become a symbol at the expense of her individuality.[29] Thus, in Out of Africa adherence to established symbolic modes of clothing and behaviour is treated as both a means of power to be used by women and as a means of erasure to be used against them.

"Copenhagen Season" (LT) deals with the manner in which the individuality of one girl, Adelaide, is erased by her clothing, which transforms her into both an object and the symbol of an ideal. Like "The Old Chevalier" and "The Invincible Slave-Owners," the tale is set in the 1870's, a time when the old aristocratic order had "one foot in the grave" (254). Early in the tale, Adelaide enters a salon wearing a "brown-and white-striped silk frock draped, braided up and frogged, and a small neat brown hat with ostrich feathers" (278). She is decorated like the furniture she is compared to:

> The art of upholstery at this period had been brought

> almost to perfection . . . the rich symmetrical curves of all sofas, chairs, and causeuses were smoothly and tightly enclosed in silks and satins, and ladies were made to look as much as possible like masterpieces of the craft. (278).

Like the sofas, Adelaide is smoothly and tightly enclosed by her clothing and the conventions it symbolizes. The reference to upholstery also tells that this is an age in which comfort has become important. The 1870's are the days in which the stark, upright and honourable aristocracy, who are described in "Daguerreotypes," flourished. Adelaide's clothing is not to be likened to the corsets that embodied the true and fine femininity. Her clothing makes her an object rather than an individual.

However, she is also a symbol of domestic womanly virtue. From early adolescence, both she and her cousin Drude have been "properly and firmly laced up and whaleboned to the armpits, since otherwise one risked that their internal parts started developing" (281). Adelaide is moulded into a symbol that leaves no room for individuality to develop. When her cousin Ib comes to takes leave of his sister Drude, before going to war in Paris, Adelaide teasingly makes him vow that he loves her and will die for her. When Drude tells her that Ib really does love her, Adelaide is aghast and resolves to meet Ib privately and apologize.

Adelaide meets Ib secretly, dressed in her maid's clothes--an attempt to break out of the constraining clothing and symbolic status society has forced upon her. She asks Ib to be her lover. He is briefly tempted: "To be a great young lady's secret lover. To meet her in the ballrooms, in the full light of their chandeliers, and receive a furtive smile..." (304). Ib does not consider being the lover of the individual Adelaide, but, rather, of "a great young lady" (304).

However, his sense of honour will not allow him to tarnish the symbol that Adelaide embodies. Ib has "nothing in him of the iconoclast" (265). Great young ladies are not women to be seduced, but symbols to be worshipped. Adelaide's fashionable clothing has transformed her into such a symbol. Ib keeps a model as his mistress, but he will not make love to Adelaide. He goes to France with his honour intact and leaves Adelaide with a broken heart and the bitter realization that she will never be seen as an individual or loved for herself.

Adelaide's fate is a tragic one. Like the "tragic sisters" Mizzi and Lotti, she is trapped by society, and no means of escape is available to her (67). In "The Invincible Slave-Owners," Axel Leth compares the Lotti and Mizzi to a waterfall that is "an incessant catastrophe" (67), and Adelaide has hair that is "very dark , with something dangerous in its rippling, like a deep narrow

river hurrying toward the cataract" (283). Thus, Adelaide, too, is linked to the "incessant catastrophe" of a waterfall and shares the sisters' tragic fate.

In fact, Adelaide may be even more tragic than the sisters, who make no attempt to rescue themselves from a trap constructed through their own practice of deception. Adelaide makes an attempt to escape from a situation that is not of her own making and fails disastrously. This story, too, is ironic, in that Ib deserts and disappoints Adelaide for the same reason that he loves her, that is, because she embodies the symbolic figure of the great young lady. Upon Ib's departure, Adelaide cries for the last time: "Later on she would think of her youth, up to the age of nineteen, as of the time when she had wept" (314). Something has been crushed out of Adelaide--her individuality or her innocence or both. She now possesses the bitter knowledge that society has shaped her into a symbol. Because she never weeps again, it seems likely that Adelaide surrenders her individuality to the pervasiveness of the symbol.

Thus, it is obvious why clothing cannot always function undisturbed as an extension of the creative and deceptive possibilities of needlework--and thus, as a means of empowerment--in Blixen's works. Blixen realizes that society has long left a women's work-basket undisturbed and has little or no interest in how she plies her needles but that until recent times (that is, the twentieth century)

society has taken a decidedly active interest in the contents of a woman's closet. In the nineteenth century (and many preceding ones), the fashions and symbols associated with women's clothing were defined and designated by male society. Such symbolism may be an empowering force, but if the symbolic status of clothing is not only predetermined but also inviolate, then the scope available for any sort of positive female action will be very limited. Thus, clothing is a true extension of needlework that offers both creative and deceptive opportunities to women, but only when circumstances and societies allow.

CONCLUSION

KEYS

A re-consideration of the introductory analogy that compared Blixen's fiction to a tapestry and her non-fiction to a pattern for the execution of that tapestry is now in order. This analogy has proved to be sound. Observations made in Blixen's non-fiction are borne out and supported in her fiction, and circumstances found in her fiction are explained and elaborated in her non-fiction. Therefore, reading Blixen's fiction in conjunction with her non-fiction is a valuable exercise that provides new insights into the interdependent nature of her works.

Without knowledge of the description of needlework found in Blixen's essay "Oration at a Bonfire," for example, the reader will not be alerted to the special significance needlework has in her tales. In the essay Blixen explains and defines the importance of the needlework motif. Weaving and needlework are portrayed as not only a means of artistic female expression, but also as important means of feminine deception that are employed by "active and significant women" as a cover for "far greater work" (Dag 76).

With this explanation in mind, references to needlework in the tales no longer blend into the background of the tapestry of Blixen's tales but become designs of central

importance. Thus, needlework becomes an important motif and metaphor for creation, deception, and duality, so that characters associated with needlework must be reconsidered and re-evaluated. Such characters are no longer associated only with proper women's work but with a metaphor for creation, deception, and duality. This association offers new perspectives on characters like Benedetta in "The Cardinal's First Tale" (LT) and Rosa in "Peter and Rosa" (WT).

Similarly, the attention given to clothing in Blixen's fiction becomes more comprehensible when one reads her non-fiction. Blixen constantly provides detailed descriptions of the clothing worn by her female characters. However, the clothing of male characters usually goes unremarked unless, perhaps, they are royalty like Prince Pozentiani and Prince Nino in "The Roads Round Pisa" (SGT 186). Why this attention to female clothing? What is the meaning of these motifs? Why are they included in Blixen's fiction? The answer is neatly laid out in Blixen's non-fiction. Clothing is not merely background for the central picture in the tapestry of the tale. In "Oration at a Bonfire" clothing is said to be "an extension of a woman's being" and is linked with needlework through concurrent examples and discussion (Dag 76). Thus, clothing can be expected to function as an extension of needlework that provides female characters with creative and deceptive possibilities. With all this in

mind, the reader becomes aware that Blixen's female characters communicate or attempt to communicate aspects of their moods, opinions, and identities to the world through their clothing.

However, the reader will also notice that clothing does not appear to share the deceptive qualities of needlework in Blixen's tales. Women like Nathalie in "The Old Chevalier" and the sisters Mizzi and Lotti in "The Invincible Slave-Owners" practice deception through clothing, but their deceptions have destructive and negative repercussions. Neither Nathalie or the sisters may be said to share the heroic and honorific status of the female needleworkers who practice deception. This circumstance, too, is explained in Blixen's non-fiction, which deals with clothing not only in relation to needlework but also in relation to society. In the essays "Daguerreotypes," "Oration at a Bonfire," and "On Modern Marriage," Blixen explains that society has constrained and controlled woman by defining and dictating her clothing. She also analyzes the clothing the nineteenth century tailored for its women. Her non-fiction establishes a pattern in which clothing is a manifestation of a particular society at a particular time, and contains examples of the definitions and symbolic meanings attached to women's clothing by male-dominated societies.

Thus, in Blixen's works, clothing becomes a means of erasing a woman's individuality, even though it conversely

offers a woman a much needed means of expressing her individuality. As I have already demonstrated, this aspect of clothing is also represented in Blixen's fiction. The pattern of clothing as a means of erasure that is set forth in her non-fiction is executed in her fiction. Therefore, in Blixen's works, clothing can be used by women to achieve positive results, but it can also be used against women to achieve negative results. Such insights are gained through reading Blixen's fiction and non-fiction in conjunction with one another.

In "A Consolatory Tale" (WT), the beggar Fath uses the same metaphoric frame work to describe the relationship between Life and Death, Man and Woman, and Rich and Poor. This metaphor consists of "two locked caskets of which each contains the key to the other" (212, 216, 218). With some alteration, the metaphor might also be used to describe the relationship between Blixen's fiction and non-fiction. Each set of writings holds keys to the other. However, in this instance, the chests are not locked. In fact, one need not even think of Blixen's writings as chests. The keys in the chests are physical instruments for providing access, but a key may also be an explanation of a fact, a solution to a problem, or a system for deciphering a code. In this sense, Blixen's fiction and non-fiction hold keys to one another.

Luckily for readers, the non-fiction and fiction are not locked, but open. Turning to the analogy of tapestry

for the last time, I find that it needs some revision. Given the emerging importance of the relationship between Blixen's fiction and non-fiction, it may not be wise to see them as separate entities--that is, as pattern and tapestry. Instead, one might see Blixen's entire oeuvre as one large tapestry wherein the non-fiction (the essays and letters) forms a border round a fictional centre (the tales). It seems best to equate fiction with the central design and non-fiction with the border, because Blixen wrote more fiction than non-fiction and her tales are undeniably more colourful and complex than her essays. The reference to the colourful nature of Blixen's fiction may be taken literally as well as metaphorically. There are many references to colours, especially blue, in her tales.[30] The border and the centre of such a tapestry are constructed from the same pattern and are woven and embroidered with the same materials. Therefore, the border or non-fiction and centre or fiction can provide keys to one another.

At times it may even be difficult to perceive a division between the border and centre or to ascertain where the division begins. Border and centre may seem to overlap. Out of Africa, for instance, has proved hard to classify. As an autobiography, it ought to be considered non-fiction, but as Judith Lee notes, Blixen "rearranged, blurred, and omitted details of her experience" (45). Critics have found Out of Africa to be "more myth than history, calling it a

pastoral, a tale of sojourn, a travel book, a memoir" and "not quite an autobiography" (45). In addition, tales are embedded within the essays. In "Daguerreotypes" Margrethe's quest to find a fitting answer for Miss Sejlstrup is described. Blixen herself says that her "youthful fantasy" played with this event and that she now tells of it "as a little story" (Dag 37). The line between fiction and non-fiction obviously can be a very fine one.

In any case, no matter how fine the division, a motif that goes unremarked in the dense complexity of the central fictional picture will gain new prominence in the border, and a motif that seems unremarkable in the border will gain new importance and complexity when rediscovered in the central design. The tapestry requires both border and its centre to be complete. Thus, Blixen's fiction and non-fiction should not be read in isolation, because they are important critical intertexts that hold keys to one another and will advance the understanding of Karen Blixen's work.

Notes

1. Curtis Cate was evidently fond of this metaphor. In another article on Karen Blixen, entitled "Isak Dinesen: The Scheherazade of Our Times," he uses it again: "But her hands, like Penelope's are busy still, weaving new fantasies on the ancient loom of myth. And it is a monumental tapestry she is working on today..." (128).

2. In his article "Isak Dinesen/Karen Blixen: The Empty Space Between Art and Church," Aage Henriksen writes that "When Karen Blixen in one of her standard paradoxes, professed that she was three thousand years old, it was probably a linguistic short form meant to indicate the historical span of her consciousness of the constant but often unseen presence of the feminine" (390).

3. Macleod also noted that Blixen was said to dislike this jacket. Parmenia Migel also says: "The English edition had a very un-African jacket, rather like tapestry, and the Germans had used a painting by Rousseau. Tania disliked them both. . ." (264). I suspect this dislike sprang from the fact that the tapestry in question is flat and simple, like a reductive cartoon of the rich tapestry Blixen's descriptions in Out of Africa evoke.

4. This point is also made by Susan Hardy Aiken in her book Isak Dinesen and the Engendering of Narrative: "Dramatizing her ironic perception of her own writing within the weighty phallocentric traditions epitomized by Homer, [Blixen] implicitly questions the interpretative stance that valorizes its masculinist perspectives..." (103).

5. Critics like Samuel Butler and Robert Graves have theorized that the Odyssey might have been written by a woman because it pays much more attention to domestic details than the Iliad . Samuel Butler published a book entitled The Authoress of the Odyssey which concludes that the Odyssey was not written "by a man for women, but for both men and women, by one who was herself a woman" (270). Robert Graves says that "it is difficult to disagree with Butler. The light, humorous, naive, spirited touch of the Odyssey is certainly a woman's" (365). However, this theory did not make a lasting impression upon the world of classical scholarship. Standard classics textbooks like Michael Grant's Myths of the Greeks and Romans dismiss this theory. Grant even calls the hypothesis "one of the most entertaining quirks of Homeric criticism" (80).

6. Dinesen alludes to the story of Philomela in "The Dreamers" (SGT), when the great opera singer Pellegrina Leoni is left without a voice. As Pellegrina lies between life and death,

her confidante and supporter, Marcus Cocoza, hears a nightingale singing below his window and thinks "of a ballet which was to take its theme from all the things that had befallen us." He means to call this ballet "Philomela" (342).

7. This poem was quoted in part and in full in needlework books throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century (Clabburn, 216). Dinesen may have encountered it.

8. There may be some question as to whether or not knitting is actually needlework. To knit can be defined as "to tie or knot together" (OED), which does not seem to suggest needlework. However, an alternate definition in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary is "to form by interlacing yarn or thread in a series of connected loops with needles. The Encyclopedia of Victorian Needlework defines knitting as "the art of uniting wool, cotton, silk, and other materials into a network by needles or pins" and includes discussion of knitting terms and techniques. Therefore, knitting differs from other needlework in that it uses two needles but fulfils the same purpose as any other form of needlework. Blixen mentions teaching the Somali to knit in Out of Africa and nothing is more likely than that she considered Dickens' Madame Defarge a descendant of Penelope.

9. Judith Thurman writes that as a young woman Blixen defined

> herself as a rebel and a Jacobin, and her notebooks swell with demonic characters--suicides, fallen women, romantic poets. She also began to write essays on the French Revolution, including a discourse of fifty pages devoted to its forgotten heroines. Robespierre was a new and unlikely idol, and she wondered if, through suffering and hunger, "I could become a person like [him]." (60)

In "The Monkey" (SGT), Athena is a Republican who has read the history of the French Revolution and longs to see where the guillotine stood (132).

10. The reference to the cross-stitched curtains is not repeated here but the Prioress is definitely in her parlour. At the height of the Prioress's anger, Boris wonders if Athena is walking through the forest with "her face as wildly set as that of the old woman in her parlour" (138). Earlier, when the Prioress receives her nephew in her "lofty parlour", we are told that "its three tall windows looked out, between heavy curtains which had borders of flower garlands done in cross stitch over the lawns and avenues of the autumnal garden" (113). Therefore, when the Prioress turns from Boris and goes to the window, it is clearly one of the three tall windows with the cross stitch curtains.

11. Rosa's escape into her dream world is described in terms that make it seem magical, as if she is working a spell, and the process of executing a spell is often referred to as weaving a spell. Spells provide escape and protection. For example, in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", the audience is instructed to

> Beware! Beware!
> His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
> Weave a circle round him thrice,
> And close your eyes with holy dread
> (49-52)

Rosa's woven dream world provides her with escape and protection.

12. The situation in which Rosa stands at her loom but cannot weave literally or figuratively because she is thinking of Peter and his outdoor world is reminiscent of Sappho's poetic fragment entitled "Paralysis":

> Mother darling, I cannot work the loom
> for sweet Kypris has almost crushed me,
> broken me with love for a slender boy.
> (31)

Blixen was probably familiar with Sappho through Denys Finch Hatton, with whom she read the classics. In the section of "From an Immigrant's Notebook" entitled "The Parrot," a woman cherishes the parrot given to her by her highborn English lover, even though she cannot understand the classic Greek phrase it repeats. A sailor-boy finally recognizes the Greek phrase as a verse from Sappho (OA, 271).

13. William Mishler calls Boris the "feminine male," and Athena "the masculine female." He suggests that the Prioress's intention in bringing Boris and Athena together is "to put them is a position [where each will] find in the other a liberating Other" (449).

14. In a letter to her brother Thomas Dinesen, Blixen quotes Sabine's speech: "I have felt it to be so utterly crazy and meaningless--in general: that I exist at all, in detail: that I was out here, that I was painting, getting up in the morning, etc., etc., and like Sabine I 'was disgusted with life as with a dress that does not fit'" (Letters, 222).

15. The sketch of the dress is found on the fifteenth plate between pages 118 and 119.

16. Denys Finch Hatton was famous for his collection of hats which he felt expressed the different aspects of his personality. Among the collection were "topies, bowlers, double terais, Hombergs, and one silken, collapsible opera hat" (Trzebinski, 152). Finch Hatton's hair began receding dramatically at an early age, which probably partially explains his fondness for hats.

17. In a letter dated 16 May 1926, Blixen describes how she would like her play, The Revenge of Truth, to be staged. Sabine is to be "fairly magnificent, for instance in silver brocade . . . as in a robe de style from Lanvin with padded hips" (256). This dress sounds like a variation on the one Blixen wore to receive the Prince of Wales in 1928. This circumstance makes it even more doubtful that the dress was designed solely by Paquin.

18. Blixen did not give up on the Pierrot costume. She posed for a photographer in the costume--see page 181 of The Life and Destiny of Isak Dinesen--and, when Thorkild Bjornvig came to dine in 1954, Karen Blixen "was not wearing the accustomed evening dress but rather a Pierrot costume" (144). Bjornvig offers no real explanation for or comment on, the Pierrot suit, though he does mention that the evening resembled a "bitter satirical play" (144). Judith Thurman writes that Karen Blixen's relationship with Thorkild Bjornvig "'ran,' as a play runs; or that it raged, as a fury rages. It was one of the great dramas of her life, dramatic in many senses, not the least of which was that she herself staged its scenes punctiliously" (335). Perhaps, in wearing the Pierrot costume, Blixen was obliquely acknowledging this aspect of her relationship with Bjornvig.

19. The fact that Pierrot spoke only through silence would have made him attractive to Blixen. In "The Blank Page" (LT), the old storyteller says that "Where the story-teller is loyal and eternally and unswervingly loyal to the story, there, in the end, silence will speak" (100). Pierrot speaks to his audience through silence.

20. Interestingly, Alkemene wears a dress that is like a lime-tree in bloom and the lime-tree stands for conjugal love in the language of flowers (Carruthers, 193). Carruthers explains that

> The lime became the symbol of wedded love, in honour of Baucis, wife of the good old shepherd, Philemon, who when Zeus and Hermes, in the guise of ordinary mortals had been denied admittance to every other house in a Phrygian village gave them shelter, and. . . Zeus rewarded them by taking them to an eminence while all the neighbouring district was covered with water. On the height there

> stood a temple, of which he made them guardians. He allowed them both to die a the same moment, and then metamorphosed them into trees --- Philemon into an oak, the symbol of hospitality; and Baucis into a lime, the emblem of conjugal affection. (Carruthers, 193-4)

Blixen was aware of the language of flowers. In "The Poet" Councilor Mathiensen laments that to please his young wife he will have to "buy the French fashion papers, carry [her] shawl at the balls of Hirschholm, study the language of flowers, and take to narrating ghost stories in the winter evenings." The language of flowers seems to be a female language.

21. There is a classical precedent for the concept of women using clothes as weapons of deceit. In the Iliad, Hera dresses herself in silks and jewels in order to seduce Zeus and distract his attention from the battle being fought by the Acheans and Trojans. The description of her putting on her clothing and jewels echoes the descriptions of heroes arming themselves for battle elsewhere in the Iliad (Book 14, 166-188).

22. The old General may also have another deadly sin in mind. He is titillated by Mizzi's dress and brings to mind the sexual attraction little girls seemed to have for nineteenth-century writers like John Ruskin, Lewis Carroll, and Ernest Dowson. In his introduction to The Annotated Alice, Martin Gardner writes that there "was a tendency in Victorian England, reflected in the literature of the time, to idealize the beauty and virginal purity of little girls. No doubt this made it easier for Carroll to suppose that his fondness for them was on a high spiritual level, though of course this hardly is a sufficient explanation for that fondness" (13). 22.The old General may well be another such man.

23. "Carnival," which was published posthumously, is the only tale that is set in the twentieth century. It takes place in 1921.

24. A clothes-screen is another word for a clothes-horse which was a wooden structure that clothing was hung upon (OED). Similarly, Blixen's nineteenth-century women are often little more than clothed objects. Just as the form of the clothes-screen would be obscured by the clothing hanging upon it, so are the identities of many nineteenth-century women blotted out or concealed by the clothing they wear.

25. Sartor Resartus means "the tailor retailored." Blixen may well have considered herself the tailor who retailored Carlyle's philosophy of men's clothes into a philosophy of women's.

26. In a letter to her sister Blixen conveys the opposite view:

> I should like to give all young women two pieces of advice: to have their hair cut short and to learn to drive a car. These two things completely transform one's life. For centuries long hair has been a sort of slavery; suddenly one feels freer than words can express, with a short mane that can be tidied in a moment and that the wind can blow through. And as nobody wears corsets out here you can really move as a man's equal. If it suited me I would wear trousers here, "shorts" as so many ladies do; but alas, alas, I do not have the legs . . . . (Letters, 144).

27. Blixen may have had Carlyle's "Church Clothes" in mind when she used religious imagery to describe the relationship between women and their clothing in "The Old Chevalier" (SGT) and "The Invincible Slave-Owners" (LT). The passage in which the Chevalier speaks of the "cynicism of these little priestesses, augurs all of them, performing with the utmost conscientiousness all the rites of a religion which they knew all about and did not believe in, upholding. . . the doctrine of their mystery even among themselves" is especially reminiscent of Carlyle's treatment of the false and empty symbolism of Church Clothes (96).

28. Calypso in "The Deluge at Norderney," and Sophie-Magdalena in "Sorrow-Acre" both look into mirrors in scenes of self-discovery.

29. This passage is reminiscent of the Chevalier's description of a little girl's education in "The Old Chevalier"(SGT):

> 'You could follow, then, the development of this idea in a little girl, as she was growing up and was gradually, no doubt in accordance with very ancient rules, inaugurated into the rites of the cult, and finally ordained. Slowly the centre of gravity of her being would be shifted from individuality to symbol, and you would be met with that particular pride and modesty characteristic of the representative of the great powers--such as you may find again in a really great artist.' (95)

30. I have not dealt with Blixen's use of colour, but colours often figure prominently in her fiction and an exploration of the colours used in the tales might prove worth while. Blue, for instance, is associated with many of the honorific women in Winter's Tales. In "The Young Man With the Carnation", Lady Helena spends her entire life looking for a particular shade of blue, Rosa weaves blue cotton in "Rosa and Peter,"

and the Virgin wears a blue apron in "The Blank Page".

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